BHĀSA

V. Venkatachalam

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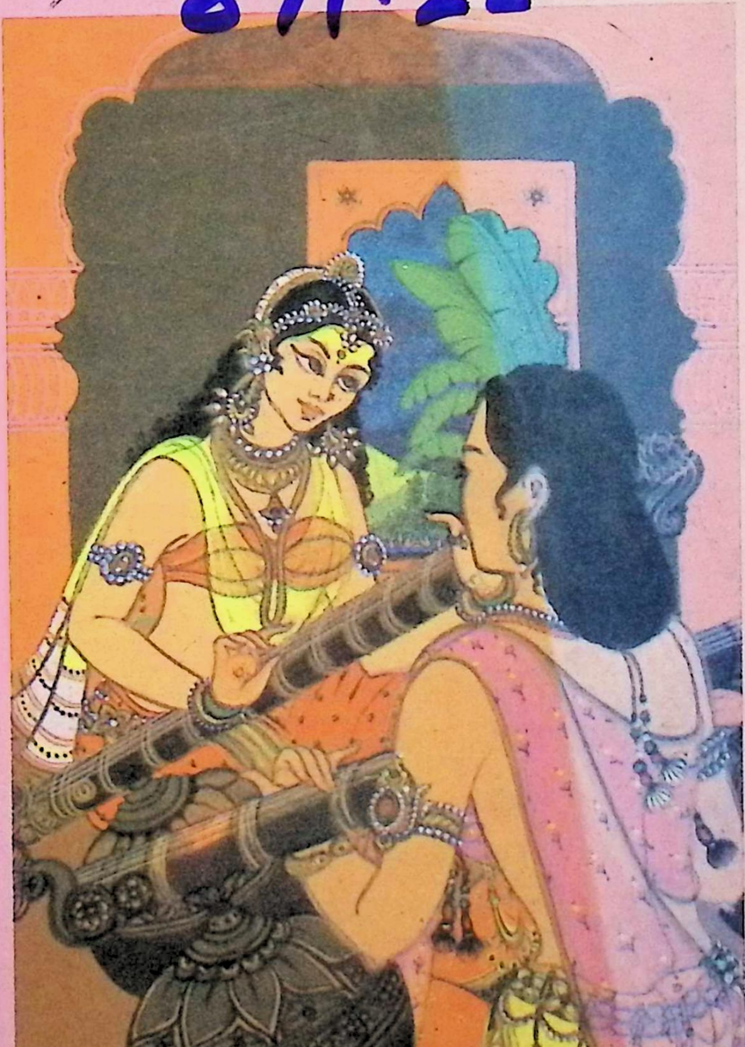

BHĀSA, a renowned Sanskrit dramatist of the pre-Christian period, was the most prolific and versatile among classical Sanskrit dramatists. With thirteen plays to his credit, his works outnumber those of Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Sudraka, Sriharsha and others. His plays present a diversity of forms and techniques as well as themes, characters and sentiments unparalleled in Sanskrit drama. Unlike other Sanskrit dramas of the later ages, Bhāsa's plays rank highest in respect of stage-worthiness. He is also considered a humorist *par excellence.*

Prof. V. Venkatachalam (b. 1925), the author of this monograph is a former Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Vikram University, Ujjain and presently the vice-chancellor of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi.

At home in three languages—English, Sanskrit and Hindi—Prof. Venkatachalam has ten books and more than hundred research papers to his credit. He has been awarded Certificate of Honour by the President of India (1986).

In this monograph, he presents, within its limited compass, the colourful spectrum of the thirteen plays of Bhāsa with a view to projecting some of the best features of Bhāsa's dramatic and literary art. Though primarily addressed to the general reader, the book is designed to appeal equally to the interests of both the common intellectual and the demands of the serious student and the specialist.

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Bhāsa

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Cover: A scene from Bhāsa's *Svapnavāsavadatta* portraying Vāsavadattā, the princess of Ujjain, receiving instruction in *vīṇā* from the captive Udayana. Gazing at Udayana's beauty in love's frenzy, she is so lost in it that the *vīṇā's* bow slips from her hand; but her listless fingers keep playing on the vacant air. (See page 94)

This painting was specially prepared for this book by Prof. (Smt.) Shiv Kumari Joshi, Head of the Dept. of Drawing and Painting, Madhav College, Vikram University, Ujjain.

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Śuddhodana the dream of Queen Māyā, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.

Bhāsa

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समुद्र-कुहर-स्थित-प्रगुण-मौक्तिकान्वेषणा-
नदीष्ण-जन-साहस-प्रथित-ताम्रपर्णी-तटे ।
स्वजन्म चरितार्थयन् गहन-तालपत्रोदधे-
स्तलादुदधरच्चिरात् तरल-'भास'-मुक्ताफलम् ।।

योऽसौ महामहोपाध्यायो गणपतिसमाह्‌वयः शास्त्री ।
तस्मै भास-सपर्या-पुष्पमिदं लघु समर्पये नूत्नम् ।।

◆

This little pūjā-flower to Bhāsa, blossomed new
Do I dedicate with utmost reverence due
To Gaṇapati Śāstrī, Mahāmahopādhyāya gloried,
Who found the twinkling 'Bhāsa'-pearl, long buried
In seas of palm-leaf scripts; deep, untamed
And lo! made good his birth in Tāmraparṇī's estuary, famed
All around the world, for daring divers brave,
Unfolding pearls galore from ocean's hidden cave.

Contents

Preface ix

1. Introduction: Greatness 1
2. Bhāsa-Problem 8
3. Life and Date 16
4. Works: Bird's-eye View 27
5. *Rāmāyaṇa* Plays 33
6. *Mahābhārata* and Kṛṣṇa-Legend Plays 66
7. Legendary and Historical Plays—Other Works 83
8. Critical Appraisal 98
9. Conclusion: Footprints 112

Devanāgarī version of verses and prose-extracts 117

Glossary 125

Select Bibliography 143

Index I (General) 156

Index II (Bhāsa, etc.)

Transliteration-key

a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	e	ai	o	au	ṁ	ḥ
अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	ँ	:

ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण
ta	tha	da	dha	na
त	थ	द	ध	न
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma
प	फ	ब	भ	म
ya	ra	la	(ḷa)	va
य	र	ल	(ळ)	व
śa	ṣa	sa	ha	
श	ष	स	ह	
*kṣa	tra	jña		
क्ष	त्र	ज्ञ		

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*These three conjunct-consonants have special formations in Devanāgarī script.

Preface

In the overall design of this monograph, I have attempted to strike the happy balance between the interests of the general reader and the demands of the more serious student of literature. If at all the scales have tilted at any time, it has mostly been in favour of the general reader. As a corollary, academic subtleties and hair-splitting controversies, of which we have God's plenty in Bhāsa-studies, have not generally been allowed to poach on these preserves. The conspicuous exception to this is the stormy debate that raged among scholars for nearly fifty years about the very authenticity of the thirteen Bhāsa--plays, recovered after centuries of hibernation, by Mahāmahopādhyāya Ganapati Sastri in 1912. The brief resumé of this vivacious controversy given in Chapter 2 'Bhāsa-Problem' is just the tip of the iceberg! On this highly sensitive issue, I have joined the positivists as much out of conviction as by expediency. Expediency did demand this of me, for, if Bhāsa had no *terra firma* to stand on, where was the *terra firma* for me to stand and write about Bhāsa? It is somewhat amusing to think of what would have happened to this monograph if I had belonged to the anti-Bhāsite or Bhāsa-doubters' camp. I would then have written of the 'so-called' author of the 'so-called' Bhāsa-plays and would have been constrained to affix a 'so-called' to the thirteen plays, practically every time I spoke about them or their author, with the result that the book would have ended up as a 'so-called Bhāsa'-monograph! Thank goodness! I am a pro-Bhāsite and subscribe to the genuineness of the thirteen plays as we have them now!

The other sensitive issue concerning Bhāsa is his date, which is inextricably linked with the vexed problem of the date of Kālidāsa. On the question of Kālidāsa's date, I hold that the root of the whole mischief behind this never-ending (perhaps never-to-end) debate is the unfortunate and unwarranted presumption made by the early western scholars that the traditional Vikramāditya of Ujjain was a myth and that the Vikram Saṁvat was a later fabrication. With this miscalculation, started the misguided efforts of those first pioneers to locate some Vikrmāditya (with reliable credentials!) to foist Kālidāsa on. This hunt led them to the historical Vikramāditya of the Gupta age. Since then, this Candragupta II Vikramāditya of the 4th century A.D. has served them excellently well as a convenient hook to hang Kālidāsa on! And there, poor Kālidāsa hangs, dislodged from the real age he lived in and dislodged too from his favourite Ujjain, the scene of his creative activity! The truth of the whole matter is—and truth has been bitter more often than not!—that no western protoganist of this school of thought, nor any of the redoubtable Indian champions of this Gupta age theory, has ever adduced any *valid fool-proof historical evidence*—in the sense historians understand 'historical evidence'—to associate the celebrated Kālidāsa with this particular Vikramāditya. The moot question is this: if the main part of the tradition about the existence of Śakāri--Vikramāditya in Ujjain in the first century B.C., coeval with the universally current Vikrama era is to be discarded as a myth, where is the need to retain the tail-appendage of that same tradition that Kālidāsa was a protege of Vikramāditya? After all, there is no unequivocal historical evidence anywhere to club Kālidāsa with Vikramāditya. It is this irrational *ardhajaratīya* approach—to use the familiar maxim of our śāstras—that has, in my opinon, wrought havoc with the date of Kālidāsa and clouded the truth beyond repair. If only the tradition clubbing Kālidāsa with Vikramāditya had also been discounted as a myth along with the tradition of Vikramāditya in Ujjain in the first century before Christ, there would have been less of wasteful exercises by scholars in our journals over the last hundred years and the date of Kālidāsa would have been tackled independently of Vikramāditya and some acceptable consensus might have emerged. The right thing to do is to discard tradition or accept it in toto, according as it conflicts or does not conflict with proven historical facts. In this case, there is no sound reason to discredit the strong tradition of Vikramāditya of Ujjain n the first century B.C. So the tradition stands and with that, stands the tradition associating Kālidāsa with this Vikramāditya.

With Kālidāsa thus lodged in the 1st century B.C., Bhāsa has to be placed earlier. By how many precise decades or centuries Bhāsa preceded Kālidāsa, none can say. Luckily however, Ganapati Sastri could trace a verse actually found in one of these thirteen plays in Cāṇakya's *Arthaśāstra*. Luckier still, Cāṇakya has specifically declared that it is a quotation from another writer. Normally, this Bhāsa-verse quoted by Cāṇakya should have been more than adequate to clinch the issue and conclude that Bhāsa was pre-Cāṇakya, that is to say, earlier than 3rd century B.C. But scholars have their own ways! They can keep controversies alive or even create controversies, where there is no scope for one! In the present case, for instance, scholars who cannot countenance a pre-Christian date for Bhāsa say that Cāṇakya must have quoted the verse from some other earlier source and Bhāsa may have borrowed it either from Cāṇakya or from Cāṇakya's source. There can be no end to arguments or to interpretations. Long ago, Bhartṛhari described the endless dilemma of arguments in his *Vākyapadīya* in a charming little couplet, which Śaṅkarācārya has almost paraphrased in a discussion on this subject in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. Freely rendered, the couplet runs thus: "Even the firm conclusions arrived at by highly gifted men with sharp brains with considerable effort are challenged and disproved by more highly gifted men with much sharper brains!" As for the endless trickery behind interpretations, one of Shakespeare's fools has put it best: "A sentence is but a chev'ril glove to a good wit. How quickly the wrong side may be turn'd outward." So, the controversy goes on. Kālidāsa's date still hangs in the balance! And Bhāsa's fate hangs in another balance behind Kālidāsa's! There is still a large section of scholars, who are convinced that Bhāsa should be placed in the 3rd century A.D., just about a century before their Kālidāsa in the Gupta age. And it must be admitted, in fairness to them, that "they are all honourable men!" and that their theory is not so hollow as to be rejected outright. The upshot of all this is, Bhāsa's date is still an open question.

I have lingered much longer than is normally permissible in this 'Preface', on Bhāsa's date, which is inseparably entangled with Kālidāsa's date. I have been dragged into this long digression on the date of Kālidāsa by the frightening prospect of many scholarly readers knitting their brows on seeing the pre-Cāṇakya date assigned to Bhāsa in this book. In fact, the late Dr. Bhagavat Saran Upadhyaya—a stalwart historian-Sanskritist with strong convictions about the Gupta age for Kālidāsa—did knit his brows on this point, when he did me the favour of going through the type-script of this book. In my treatment of Bhāsa's date, which had to be precious brief, I resisted the temptation to get involved with the mesh of Kālidāsa's date and deliberately avoided stepping into that dangerously slippery ground. But looking to the possible strong reactions of the many protoganists of the Gupta age theory, this brief reference appeared essential. I only hope that this little additional note will at least clarify my basic approach, even if it cuts no ice. I am aware that this tangential swoop on the Kālidāsa-controversy in this Bhāsa-Preface is a violation of my own set norm of keeping controversies at a distance. I am equally aware that these dryasdust appendages of Bhāsa-studies least concern the general readers, who eagerly look for a direct rapport with the sublime and beautiful in

Bhāsa's works. I crave their indulgence for this forced digression and hope that they will not find the following pages wanting.

In the treatment of the different dramas, I have not observed any rigid uniformity in respect of the space allotted to them. It will be quite apparent that the *Rāmāyaṇa* plays have received the lion's share of the total space available. However, this patent imbalance in the size of this chapter is there by design, not by accident. The number of plays being large, it was not possible to do even tolerable justice to all of them within the limited compass prescribed for the book by the Akademi. I was left with Hobson's choice of selecting some play or plays for fuller treatment and adopt a sort of 'touch and let go' attitude with the rest. When such preferential treatment was inevitable, my choice fell on the *Rāmāyaṇa* plays for two chief reasons. First is the high popularity of the *Rāmāyaṇa*-story among all sections of the people. With the original story as a back-drop, it was convenient to project the dramatist's art to advantage. Familiarity with the source of the plot is an almost essential pre-requisite for critical understanding of the art of any dramatist. Secondly, one of the two *Rāmāyaṇa* plays is an early endeavour of Bhāsa at writing drama, and the other, a mature creation. The two could serve excellently well to present the weaker and the stronger sides of his art, dramatic as well as poetic.

Among the rest of the plays, I have made an exception for *Svapnavāsavadatta* only, in view of its supreme position as Bhāsa's acknowledged masterpiece. But even *Svapnavāsavadatta* could not receive its full due, so heavily did the limitations of space weigh on my mind, when I wrote. The remaining ten plays have all been given a rough deal and summarily dismissed within two or three pages, with the dreaded space-bar always hanging over my head like the sword of Damocles, as the hand wrote! As a result, many more things of interest to the general reader which could have been—rather, ought to have been—said, had to be left unsaid. This has left me ruminating over an oft-quoted verity of Kālidāsa: a thing that clamours for expression but is left unsaid, leaves a trail of regret behind.

A similar concern for the general reader has again been the principle governing the pattern I have adopted for presenting the literary beauties of Bhāsa. In projecting the integral picture of Bhāsa's dramatic craft and poetic art as well as in the isolated study of individual plays, aspects of lower criticism, which are concerned with the outer form or structure of drama and poetry, fine academic distinctions, linguistic nuances and the like have either been kept out or played on a lower key. As against this, higher literary values related to the content, namely, portrayal of characters who hold the mirror up to life, delineation of the varied emotions of the human heart and so on, which could appeal more readily and evoke easier response from the general reader, have been given maximum importance and attention.

However, in the printing of Sanskrit extracts in Roman script, I have followed the internationally accepted norms of transliteration, in the interests of accuracy, though it would mean much inconvenience to ordinary readers. To adopt the so-called popular spellings would have meant opening the door to chaos. Left to myself, I would have opted for the Devanāgarī script for the longer extracts at least. It would have certainly been more convenient to Indian readers. But I could not help it. A transliteration-key has been given for guidance. Devanāgarī version of all the verses and long prose-extracts is also provided at the end in the sequence of the pages. Necessary references have also been cited for all the passages.

A word about the English translations of the Sanskrit verses and prose passages, quoted in the book. The translations are all mine, with one solitary exception of that controversial Bhāsa-verse quoted by Cāṇakya, for which I have utilised the fine rendering by Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar. (p. 24). I have scrupulously avoided rigid paraphrases or literal translations, which do justice neither to the original languages nor to the language translated into! Mine are invariably free renderings, seeking to re-create the spirit of the original in English. I have tried hard to make them the nearest approximation to 'trans-creations', as far as I could make it. In a number of cases, I have tried my hand at verse--renderings, though I do not have even a nodding acquaintance with English prosody. In the absence of the necessary discipline, I had to be guided solely by the rhythm-sense of the lay ear and by whatever practical background I have of English literature. I can't myself explain satisfactorily why I hazarded this experiment in verse-renderings. Perhaps, I may say with the poet: "I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came". The end-product is before the readers now to read and judge. I shall welcome suggestions from knowledgeable readers for their improvement.

I am deeply conscious of the intellectual stature of the *elite* class of readers, to whom this monograph is addressed. It is anybody's guess that some of them could be my superiors, although less informed of Sanskrit or its literature. Keeping this in mind, I have tried not to narrate mere stories, while presenting the argument of the various plays, to serve as the essential base for critical exposition of their beauties. Wherever I could make it or the narration permitted it, I have interspersed the story-telling with some critical remark or other about the dramatist's art, for the edification of the reader. Will it not be presumptuous of me to assume the role of a children's story-teller, before readers with highly cultivated sensibilities and dole out thirteen stories to them in a series?

I have to close this long 'Preface' with my expression of gratitude to all those who have contributed to the production of this book in some form or other. The *agra-tāmbūla*—to put it in the conventional Sanskrit parlance—naturally goes to my respected teacher, Prof. T.V. Srikantha Sastri of St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai, who had inspired me with such a passion for Sanskrit and its literature that I left Mathematics, my first love in those days and joined the Sanskrit fold. It is a fortuitous coincidence that I learnt my first lessons in Bhāsa's *Svapnavāsavadatta* at his feet! It is a matter of supreme satisfaction to me that I continue to receive the blessings and guidance of this *Sāhityaguru*—now an octogenarian—to this day.

I am beholden to the Sahitya Akademi for inviting me to write on Bhāsa for their 'Makers of Indian Literature' series. I looked upon this assignment from the National Academy of Letters as a rare honour and have spared no pains on my part to make the book measure up to those standards. I must add a special word of thanks to Dr. R.N. Dandekar, the then Convener of the Sanskrit Advisory Board. Besides being instrumental in selecting me for this assignment, he evinced continuous interest in its completion, beset as it was with obstacles of all manner and kind right from the submission of my typescript in 1979 till date, the last one being the heart attack which rendered me immobile and inactive for many months.

I deem it a rare privilege that Dr. Umashankar Joshi could find time to peruse in-depth the two opening chapters of the typescript. He offered some valuable suggestions. A mere expression of thanks would be no requital for such a condescending gesture from a doyen among contemporary litterateurs. I offer him my respectful praṇāma-s, as the nearest possible *quid pro quo* for his love. My only regret is I could not take full advantage of his guidance. I owe a special word of thanks to Dr. S. Mallikarjunan of the English Department of Sagar University and also to Dr. D.S. Tatke and Dr. L.S. Sharma, my erstwhile colleagues in the English Department of Vikram University for some edifying discussions about English usage.

My daughter Uma (now, Uma Jayaraman) with her double postgraduation in Sanskrit and English helped me in preparing the fair copy out of my first drafts with their labyrinthine markings and also wrote the first drafts of some chapters to my dictation. Miss Ajita Trivedi, Assistant Professor of Sanskrit in the Girls' Degree College, Ujjain, sat with me for many days and gave many man-hours—to say 'woman--hours' would be to forget that 'man' in English etymology is included in 'woman' and that 'man' originally denoted 'person' and included both sexes—out of her busy schedule, for compiling the rough materials for the Index. Thanks to numerous constraints, the Index had to be compiled somewhat hastily. As a result, it could not be what I wished it to be, in spite of the considerable pains taken and the long time spent on its compilation. All the same, it is my hope that, with all its imperfections, it will prove a useful tool for workers on Bhāsa. To Ajita Trivedi and Uma—former students both—I extend my thanks and blessings. M/s. Bharti Printers, who have been subjected to much hardship on account of the intervening delays and my insistence on accuracy, also deserve our special thanks for their co-operation.

I close with my grateful obeisance to Bhagavān Mahākāla (Lord of Infinite Time), the presiding deity of this *puṇya-tīrtha* for having seen this through to the finish, in spite of the ups and downs of Time!

Ujjain
14.1.1986 (*Makara Saṅkrānti*) V.VENKATACHALAM

Preface to the Second Edition

When the Sahitya Akademi informed me as early as 1989 that I might revise the book for a second edition, I felt immensely happy that the reader-response was quite encouraging, judged by readership standards for such a book in this country. I took advantage of this opportunity to correct the few lapses and errors that had crept into the previous edition and submitted my revised copy to the Akademi towards the end of 1989. However, thanks to the Akademi's own constraints, the book could got its turn only now.

I have made minor verbal improvements here and there in the text as well as in the English renderings of the Sanskrit verses. I have made similar minor corrections and additions in the Glossary, the Bibliography and the Index too. Besides, I have now enlarged the scope of the Index to include the Preface too, in view of its academic relevance.

It is highly gratifying to me that the Sahitya Akademi has since published translations of this book in four major languages of the country—Bengali and Gujarati from the North and Kannada and Telugu from the South, in pursuance of their policy of making their publications available in all the recognised languages of India. I wish to place on record here my personal gratitude to Prof. K. Krishnamoorthy (former Professor of Karnataka University) and Prof. P. Sriramachandrudu (former Professor of Osmania University)—senior and eminent Sanskritists both—who did me a real favour by agreeing to translate the book in Kannada and Telugu respectively. Likewise, my good friends Dr. Pratap Bandyopadhyaya, Professor of Sanskrit, Burdwan University and Dr. Gautam Vadilal Patel, Professor of Sanskrit, St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad readily agreed to my request to do the Bengali and Gujarati translation for the Akademi. I am grateful to both these friends for honouring me and my book with their scholarly translations.

V. VENKATACHALAM

Delhi
6.10.1992 (Vijayadaśamī)

1

Introduction: Greatness

ekasya tiṣṭhati kavergṛha eva kāvyam
anyasya gacchati suhṛd-bhavanāni yāvat /
nyasyā vidagha-vadaneṣu padāni śaśvat
kasyāpi sañcarati viśva-kutūhalīva //

—Quoted by Rājaśekhara
in *Kāvyamīmāṁsā*

> The poetry of a poetaster is confined within the walls of his home; the poetry of many others is a trifle luckier and reaches as far as the houses of their friends; but rare indeed is the phenomenon of the inspired poet, whose magical word passes from mouth to mouth of legions of connoisseurs and, like the inquisitive world-traveller, continues its eternal journey till the world's end is reached!

Bhāsa stands at the threshold of Sanskrit literature. He is *the earliest* in the long line of Sanskrit dramatists, whose works have come down to us. He is anterior even to Kālidāsa, the universally acclaimed master of the literary art in ancient India. However, the mere fact that Bhāsa lived and wrote before Kālidāsa—may be, some centuries before Kālidāsa—would not have been a feather in his cap, had not Kālidāsa himself declared openly that Bhāsa was one of the celebrated dramatists of his days and that he himself was just a dwarf before the ancient giants of the dramatic art. From the language and manner of Kālidāsa's reference, it will be quite reasonable to guess that Kālidāsa counted Bhāsa among his great predecessors and also, probably, that he drew his inspiration and light from Bhāsa.

Making his *debut* as a dramatic writer, the young Kālidāsa was constrained to confess, in so many words, in the prologue to his *Mālavikāgnimitra*, that his work could be no match for the dramas of his illustrious predecessors and to plead, rather apologetically, to his discriminating audience to judge him on merits without being swayed by blind partiality for the ancients. Three dramatists are specifically mentioned by name and Bhāsa heads the list. Little did the novice realise, when he wrote those lines, that his nascent genius was soon to throw those 'Big three' and all their ilk into the shade. Such a fine tribute to Bhāsa, coming from the pen of Kālidāsa—even granting, it was partly prompted by modesty—cannot be dismissed lightly. It speaks volumes for Bhāsa's status among dramatists of note in pre-Kālidāsian India. Indeed, it proves to the hilt that Bhāsa had secured a niche in the temple of Indian dramatists, long before Kālidāsa emerged on the scene. And it is no poor consolation to the apologist of Bhāsa that twenty-five long centuries of uninterrupted and multi-faceted growth of the theatre in India have not dislodged him to this day from that old niche in the neighbourhood of Kālidāsa—the phenomenon of dislodging images from their niches, not very uncommon though in our social milieu, particularly at times of political upheavals!

There is yet another aspect of this reference to Bhāsa by Kālidāsa, which has special relevance in the context of Bhāsa's pre-eminent place as a dramatist. Of the three celebrated dramatists of his time, Bhāsa, Saumilla and Kaviputra, mentioned by Kālidāsa; Bhāsa's works alone have survived today, the works of the other two having slipped from the *terra firma* of history to the loose sands of speculation. This provides a true measure of the greatness of Bhāsa's art. Apparently, he alone had lustre enough not to be totally effaced out of existence by the overshadowing brilliance of Kālidāsa, though it will be idle to deny that Bhāsa could, by no standards, measure up to Kālidāsa. Kālidāsa strode through the Indian literary scene like a colossus, making pygmies of his contemporaries and predecessors. And if Bhāsa too got dwarfed in this process by Kālidāsa, it cuts nothing more than a trifle from his greatness. On the other hand, what is really significant is, Bhāsa could survive Kālidāsa, the giant eliminator of the past and, what is still more pertinent to a critical assessment of his art, he was the lone survivor. To appreciate the full significance of this survival by Bhāsa, we should pause to ponder over the mighty impact of Kālidāsa on the Indian theatre. Kālidāsa was a phenomenon. If we may toy with a modern metaphor of the machine age to picture this phenomenal personality of the classical past, we might as well say, he was a sort of giant bull-dozer. After he swept through, there was no question at all of leaving anything standing anywhere in the field—not, at any rate, the petty stumps and stones! But Bhāsa stood, and let it be said to his credit, he stood alone. He was the lone rock that could keep the Kālidāsa bull-dozer at bay and refuse to be levelled up by the universal leveller! What more need be said of the glory of Bhāsa? If we leave out Bhāsa for the nonce, the erasement of the entire gamut of earlier literary exercises by Kālidāsa was total; unfortunate as it may be for the student of our cultural history.

And what is the result? The extant dramatic works of Bhāsa, stand today as the earliest available specimens of the dramatic art in India. The number of these surviving plays of Bhāsa is quite considerable. There are thirteen of them—a very respectable number, judged by the comparative figures of the preserved output of Indian playwrights, ancient, mediaeval or modern, if we leave out of consideration, some mushroom growths of mediocre plays in the modern period, which are yet to be tested in the crucible of time. Bhāsa was certainly a very prolific writer of plays of the period. For sheer quantity of output, he is far ahead of all others in the race. No other playwright of the past, not excluding the top-notchers, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti, could reach anywhere near Bhāsa's score. It looks strange, though it is true, that this most ancient dramatist of India, should have such a large number of plays to his credit, presenting a sharp contrast to the humble score of three, two and one registered by dramatists of succeeding centuries. It is on account of this exceptionally large number of plays written by him that his dramas came to be known as *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakra* (literally, Cycle of Bhāsa's dramas) from very early days.

Thus, in respect of the number of plays, Bhāsa is the only Indian dramatist, who can compare favourably with the ancient Greek masters of drama. Even in the case of Bhāsa, the comparison could be hazarded only with reference to the preserved plays. If we think of the plays that the ancient Greek dramatists actually wrote for their stage—which was the pride of their fully blossomed aesthetic sensibilities—Bhāsa would be nowhere near even their lowest scorer! The prolificity of the Greek dramatists has almost no parallel anywhere in the world. This was the direct result of the proverbial love the Greeks bore for the theatre and also of the tremendous encouragement it received from the state. If such state patronage proved to be a blessing for the cultivation of the Greek stage, it was also a curse in disguise. Such mass production of plays posed problems of preservation. With such prolificity, it was difficult to expect every thing that was written to be preserved for posterity. As a natural consequence, less than a fourth and sometimes less than a tenth of what was written and put on stage could pass muster as fine and gain passage through the sieves held by Time, the rest of it all being rejected as coarse and allowed to "waste its sweetness" away. Of Aeschylus and Sophocles, who are credited with having written upwards of ninety and a hundred and twenty dramas, a mere seven have survived of each. Euripides and Aristophanes were a trifle more fortunate with nineteen plays of the former and eleven of the latter rescued from oblivion for the future connoisseurs of the theatre, out of their approximate output of eighty and fifty plays respectively.

But India can boast of no such precise figures or dates and places of staging for the plays of her dramatists, the tallest among them not excepted. Even their hypothetical dates still fluctuate in centuries, what with all the assiduous labours of the modern orientalists to redeem in patches the ruined edifice of our literary history. When it comes to historical documentation of any kind—particularly in matters secular, we have to hold our heads low, before the western nations and the Chinese.

To return to Bhāsa, I must confess, it will be next to impossible to hazard any sort of answer to such questions like: What is the actual number of plays that Bhāsa wrote, apart from those that are extant now? Is it, at least, possible to say, with even a faint degree of certainty, that he wrote more plays, over and above the thirteen which Time has preserved for us? Are we in a position to say anything about the provenance of Bhāsa and the place (or at least the region of the country) where these great plays were first staged? Bhartṛhari's sage prescription of prudent silence for the ignorant in an assembly of the learned is our only shelter against such a barrage of questions! (*vibhūṣaṇam maunam apaṇḍitānām*). With such inconvenient questions, at any rate, prudence will certainly be the better part of valour for our literary historians!

However, the fact that Bhāsa was a more prolific writer than other playwrights seems to have been recognised very early in India. The best proof of this is the expression *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakra*, which had become a current coin in India to refer to his plays from very old days. It is found used in a floating traditional verse—to which we shall have occasion to refer later on—preserved in one of our old anthologies and attributed to Rājaśekhara, the versatile writer of the 9th. century. Rājaśekhara has used this expression as a sort of figurative Sanskrit parallel of a conventional English phrase like "Complete set of Bhāsa's works". This obviously points to the currency of numerous dramas of Bhāsa, down to Rājaśekhara's times. Though the exact number is not specified by Rājaśekhara, it must have been considerably large to justify their description as a *nāṭaka-cakra*. No critic ever chose to credit Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti or Harṣa with a *nāṭaka-cakra*. The reason is obvious. None of them had produced even the minimum number, sufficient to earn the dignity of "Complete Works". Three dramas can not make a big set large enough to be called "Complete Works", even as a cluster of ten persons does not make a crowd!

The total upshot of it all is: Bhāsa has held, and still continues to hold, the monopoly of fashioning a sizeable *nāṭaka-cakra* in Sanskrit. Though the importance of this achievement need not be underestimated, this cannot be the ultimate criterion to decide his greatness. It will be futile to think of the greatness of a writer in terms of the volume of his writing or the number of his works. Poetry is not like a game of cricket, where the score-board has almost the final say about your worth! A none-too-well-known Sanskrit *subhāṣita* brings this idea home through a somewhat piquant comparison: the she-pig breeds tens and tens of repulsive younglings in quick succession, but the cow-elephant delivers, after years of waiting, a single cub, which is fondled by princely hands! It will be a travesty of literary genius to measure it in terms of quantity or number of books. Instances have not also been wanting, where poets won recognition and climbed to dizzy heights of greatness through just a single work or even stray small poems. One of the best examples in Sanskrit is Amaruka, who has bequeathed to Sanskrit poetry just a hundred loose verses on Śṛṅgāra; but even an exacting critic like Ānandavardhana who was very niggardly in praise and would concede the title of *Mahākavi* to just two or three among Sanskrit poets, was compelled to say of Amaruka that every verse of his was equivalent to a hundred books.

It will, therefore, do no good to Bhāsa to sport his *nāṭaka-cakra* or commend its size alone as a mark of his greatness. And the fact of the matter is, Bhāsa's survival did not at all depend on the weight of numbers. The true characteristics of a good drama are writ large on many of his plays. If the fire of mellow genius is not fully ablaze in all of them, the alluring glow of the bursting spark is evident everywhere. Some of the mature plays like *Svapnavāsavadatta* can easily stand comparison with the best dramas of the world for their pure dramatic qualities: the deftness of plot construction, the unity and verisimilitude of the plot-tissue, the even rise and fall of dramatic tempo, the organised build-up of the climax from the initial seeds of conflict and its entanglements, followed by its swift unravelling in an unanticipated *denouement*, the effective alternation of foreshadowing and suspense, the sparkling wit of its dialogues, the portrayal of living characters holding a mirror up to life and, above all, the powerful representation of the varied emotions of the human heart, wherein lies the soul of any drama. And for sheer stage-worthiness—the crown of dramatic excellence—it will be quite safe to say that Bhāsa ranks higher than even Kālidāsa.

All these apart, there is yet another important aspect of Bhāsa's greatness in the Sanskrit theatre. His thirteen preserved plays present such extraordinary diversity of form and technique, not to be met with in the creations of any other Sanskrit dramatist. A familiar verse which glorifies writers of the dramatic monologue known as *Bhāṇa* actually casts an aspersion against Kālidāsa that he had no powers to compose *Bhāṇa*. Unlike Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti or Harṣa, who adopted only the most familiar forms of drama like Nāṭaka, Prakaraṇa or Nāṭikā, Bhāsa has given proof of his talent in the construction of plays of the less familiar types as well. The extant Bhāsa-plays contain examples of the familiar types like Nāṭaka as well as of the less familiar minor types like *Vyāyoga, Samavakāra, Utsṛṣṭikāṅka, Vīthī* and *Īhāmṛga*, though scholarly opinion is divided in some cases about the identification of these types among the thirteen plays. This is a fine tribute to Bhāsa's creative versatility and proves that his genius was equally at home in all these varied forms of dramatic presentation. The works of no other Sanskrit dramatist exhibit such width of range, in so far as theatrical types are concerned.

Quite apart from all these considerations, it will be pertinent to consider also how these dramas were received by the people at large, for whom they were primarily written and staged. In a field like drama, popular response should, in the ultimate analysis, be the final touchstone of greatness. This naturally raises the question: How did Bhāsa's plays fare on the stage? How were they received by the contemporary spectators, lay or otherwise? What had the critics with dramatic expertise to say about them? Did they receive the approbation of theatre-lovers of many succeeding generations too? Is there a shred of evidence—however weak it be by strict canons of historiography—to say that the theatre-going public of India continued to relish and appreciate Bhāsa's plays during the centuries that followed? Did Bhāsa's plays travel from the regions of his own native home or province to other regions of India too during, or at least after, his days? Or did they enjoy only limited popularity? Questions such as these, are easy to ask but hard to answer with even a shadow of precision. Fortunately, we have some evidence in the creative and critical literature of the post-Bhāsa periods to show that Bhāsa continued to be a favourite of the Indian theatre till about the end of the 12th century. It is again a lucky coincidence that these direct and indirect references in later writings to Bhāsa or his works are representative of different parts of the country, covering practically the whole of the subcontinent and extend over a full span of nearly fifteen centuries from the beginning of the Christian era. Such poets and critics, who refer to Bhāsa or his works include Kālidāsa (1st cent. B.C.) and Bhoja (11th cent.) of Mālava, Vāmana (9th cent.) and Abhinavagupta (11th cent.) of Kashmir, Bāṇa (7th cent.) and Vākpatirāja (8th cent.) of Kanauj, Somaprabhasūri (12th cent.) of Anhilwad (Gujarat), Soḍḍhala (11th cent.) of ancient Koṅkaṇa with its capital in Sthānaka (modern Thānā), Iḷaṅkovaḍigal the classical Tamil epic poet (2nd cent.) and possibly Śāradātanaya (13th cent.) of Tamil Nadu and, last of all, the Cākyārs of Kerala, where Bhāsa's plays became part and parcel of the repertoire of the professional actors and ruled the roost for many centuries.

One of the most significant of these extolling references to Bhāsa's popularity in the Indian theatre, comes from no less a critic than Daṇḍin. Here is my free rendering of Daṇḍin's verse in the *Avantisundarīkathā*, shorn of the technical subtleties:

> Long ago did Bhāsa breathe his last;
> But lo, even now, after all his life is past,
> He lives, through plays of flawless skill —
> His veritable bodies, which Time dare not kill.

Let it not be forgotten that Daṇḍin came nearly twelve centuries after Bhāsa. He belonged, moreover, to the distant south, far away from Bhāsa's native home and the scene of his creative activity, which in all probability, lay somewhere in north India. All this gives a sure indication—even if it cannot be taken as conclusive evidence—of Bhāsa's uninterrupted and supreme hold over the Indian theatre, throughout the length and breadth of the country for nearly two millennia.

2

Bhāsa-Problem

tattva-bubhutsoḥ kathā vādaḥ

—Keśavamiśra, *Tarkabhāṣā*

An academic debate is one that is undertaken by men of dispassionate outlook with the sole intention of comprehending the truth.

A passing reference may be made here to what is known as the Bhāsa-problem in Sanskrit literary circles, in which many doyens of Sanskrit studies have expended their scholarship, talents and dialectical skill for over three decades. The plays of Bhāsa became the hotbed of a highly animated controversy, which shook the world of Sanskritists and was pursued with persistent and unabated vigour by scholars in India and abroad for many years. The numerous articles in the journals of oriental research devoted to this controversy and the separate treatises on this subject in English and foreign languages as well as in Indian regional languages, if compiled together, can make big tomes. I shall give here just a brief resumé, to provide a sort of brid's-eye view of the general trends, in so far as they can be of some interest to the general reader of Bhāsa or serve to whet his appetite for the appreciation of Bhāsa.

It was in 1912 that Mahāmahopādhyāya. T. Ganapati Sastri first announced his rediscovery of the lost works of Bhāsa through his Introduction to the *editio princeps* of *Svapnavāsavadatta*, the universally acknowledged masterpiece of Bhāsa. For mysterious reasons, Bhāsa had gone into a long spell of hibernation and suffered almost total neglect for many centuries after initially occupying a commanding position in the field for more than fifteen centuries. Prior to that, Bhāsa was, no doubt, studied assiduously, as is evident from the excerpts from his plays as well as the extolling and even hyperbolical references to him in earlier works of literary criticism up to the 10th and even the 12th century. What factors had actually led to such neglect and why it persisted for nearly 800 years afterwards, it is difficult to say. It is, however, probable that the downward tilt in literary taste contributed not a little to his fall from favour. That was the age, which placed a premium on the odd and the recondite and unfortunately upheld the perverted view of poetry, which looked upon what was most difficult and wonderful as the most beautiful! The age adored verbal jugglery and extolled linguistic gymnastics in poetry to the skies. In sharp contrast with such an attitude to literary values, the strength of Bhāsa's poetry lay in its simplicity and its beauty, in its spontaneity. Thus the native simplicity of Bhāsa and the literary critics of the artificial interregnum were at the antipodes, so much so, that the age gave the cold shoulder to Bhāsa. Slow extinction of the plays of Bhāsa was the natural but inevitable outcome of such devaluation of pure poetry. Gradually, Bhāsa got reduced to a mere name and, by the beginning of the 20th century, what remained of this pioneer Indian dramatist was limited to the stray references to him and to his works, primarily to his *Svapnavāsavadatta*, in the earlier critical writings of the great masters Bhāmaha, Vāmana, Abhinavagupta, Bhoja, Śāradātanaya, Rāmacandra-Guṇacandra or Sāgaranandin and in the references by later poets like Bāṇa, Vākpatirāja or Daṇḍin.

With the introduction of Sanskrit to the west, came a new orientation in the approach to literary studies and researches. As a direct consequence of the flair of western scholars to reconstruct the edifice of India's literary history out of the ruined remnants that remained of it, long--forgotten books, which had gone out of the traditional regimen of Sanskrit learning were rediscovered and published. The *Artha-śāstra* of Kauṭilya, a great many Buddhist texts and a host of other such books were all recovered and given a new lease of life. The works of Bhāsa were one of the oldest links in this long chain of rediscovered treasures of India's heritage, which, like the *Artha-śāstra*, or Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* also came from the south. Commending the importance of this discovery of Bhāsa, Dr. Pusalker rightly observes: "The south has thus laid the world of Orientalists under an obligation once more, by delivering a casket of precious jewels, that was hitherto known only by mere name." And the whole credit for this epoch-making discovery of Bhāsa goes to Mahāmahopādhyāya T. Ganapati Sastri who hailed from the little known village of Taruvai in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu and adorned with distinction the chair of the Curator of the Department for the publication of Sanskrit MSS. in the erstwhile Travancore state and edited many valuable books in the famous Trivandrum Sanskrit Series.

In the course of his tour for search of Sanskrit MSS., MM Ganapati Sastri came across a palm-leaf codex in Malayalam script, which contained ten of the now well-known thirteen plays, and another (later identified as *Dūtavākya*) in a mutilated state. With his indefatigable zeal, the Sastri succeeded in locating more MSS. of these very works in other collections, mostly in Kerala, thus completing the full picture of the thirteen plays. The incomplete part of *Dūtavākya* and the lacunae in the first damaged MS. of *Svapnavāsavadatta* could all be filled up and he was able to give the text of *Svapnavāsavadatta* to the world of scholars in 1912, with a bilingual Introduction in English and Sanskrit running to 90 pages, in which he set out at length his reasons for concluding that the unidentified and differently named play of his first Malayalam codex was the real *Svapnavāsavadatta* of Bhāsa in spite of its divergences and also that the remaining twelve plays too were from the pen of the same author, Bhāsa. Ganapati Sastri observed a family likeness in all the thirteen plays, besides a number of common passages and repetitions. The structural pattern of the prologues was identically the same. The device of suggesting the names of the principal *dramatis personae* in the opening benedictory verse was common to some of them. The *bharatavākyas* of six plays of the group mentioned a certain Rājasiṁha as the contemporary king and were wholly or partly identical. These, in the opinion of Sastri, were unmistakable evidences of their common authorship.

The question then arose, who this common author could be? Here, two earlier references to Bhāsa and his plays came to the rescue of Dr. Sastri. Speaking of Bhāsa's fame, Bāṇa has mentioned certain special characteristics of his dramas and instituted a punning comparison of Bhāsa's plays with temples.

sūtradhāra-kṛtārambhair-nāṭakair-bahu-bhūmikaiḥ /
sapatākair-yaśo lebhe bhāso devakulairiva //

All the characteristics of Bhāsa's plays mentioned by Bāṇa in this verse were to be found, according to Dr. Sastri, in the thirteen plays, pointing to Bhāsa as their common author.

The second reference was more decisive.

bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakre-'pic-chekaiḥ kṣipte parīkṣitum /
svapnavāsavadattasya dāhako'bhūnna pāvakaḥ //

This verse of Rājaśekhara, preserved in one of our early anthologies, actually speaks of *Svapnavāsavadatta* as a drama of Bhāsa and glorifies its excellence by the strange assertion that it was not burnt by fire when the complete works of Bhāsa were subjected to a fire-ordeal. With this clear affirmation that Bhāsa was the author of *Svapnavāsavadatta*, it was possible to conclude that the common author of all the thirteen plays was Bhāsa. This is the long and short of Ganapati Sastri's theory attributing the thirteen plays to Bhāsa.

This discovery of Bhāsa-plays by Ganapati Sastri attracted world-wide attention and created a stir in literary coteries. And as it happens with all new discoveries, strong protests were raised against Ganapati Sastri's identification of the plays as Bhāsa's works. Some of the extremists contended that none of the thirteen plays was Bhāsa's. Others conceded the title to a few but refused to accept Bhāsa's authorship for all the plays.

These debates gave a fresh impetus to many scholars to re-examine the hypothesis of common authorship proposed by Ganapati Sastri. Closer scrutiny revealed more facts. More evidence of common authorship emerged out of such studies, which unravelled the numerous similarities of the thirteen plays with regard to their structural pattern, dramatic technique, use of *patākāsthānaka*, vocabulary and expressions marked by recurrence of certain typical words and phrases, depiction of prohibited things on the stage like death and sleep, actual bringing of water on the stage, uniform patterns of grammatical solecisms and Prakrit archaisms and stylistic and metrical peculiarities; besides common dramatic situations, common imagery and predilection for certain motifs, themes and descriptions, common names for minor characters and also repetition of similar ideas and of stanzas in whole or parts. Giving a conspectus of such similarities, Dr. Sarup wrote: "The community of technique, language, style, ideas, treatment and identity of names of *dramatis personae*, prose and metrical passages and scenes are so remarkable that the conclusion of their common authorship is inevitable." In the opinion of Dr. Paranjape the uniformity of grammatical solecisms "is the most unquestionable proof that places beyond all doubts the common origin of all these plays."

However, such arguments for the common authorship of the thirteen plays were vehemently opposed by scholars of the opposite camp. Other plays, which exhibited the same similarities were pushed into the controversy and it was sought to be made out that the structural similarities of the thirteen plays were just regional characteristics of Kerala MSS. and plays of Kerala authors and had nothing to do with the so-called peculiarities of Bhāsa's plays. On the ground of similarity with such plays of known authorship, efforts were made to father the thirteen plays too on such Kerala authors like Śaktibhadra.

By a coincidence, Śaktibhadra's *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi* and Bhāsa's *Rāmāyaṇa* plays, *Pratimā* and *Abhiṣeka* were found together in an old damaged palm-leaf Ms. of Malabar and much capital was sought to be made out of this. Śaktibhadra has also spoken of *Unmādavāsavadatta* as his other drama. Scholars tried to equate it with Bhāsa's *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*, where we have the scene of Yaugandharāyaṇa's feigned madness. But this attribution of the thirteen plays to Śaktibhadra on the basis of such slender evidence was soon exploded by the preponderant internal evidence of *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi* itself, which had quite a different tale to tell.

Equally flimsy was the effort of some scholars to identify the Rājasiṁha of Bhāsa's *bharatavākyas* with the Pallava king Narasiṁhavarman or the Pāṇḍya king Tenmāran, merely on the ground that these kings bore the title Rājasiṁha, with a view to prove that the thirteen plays were the creations of some court poet of either of these kings. If such had been the case, it will be impossible to explain why stories of northern kings like Udayana, Kuntibhoja, Pradyota or Darśaka and plots centering round northern cities like Ujjayinī, Kośāmbī, Kāśī, Sauvira and Ayodhyā should have been dramatized by the South Indian poet in preference to the themes of their own ancient kings or their capitals, Kāñcī and Madurai.

Out of all this plethora of protests and counter-protests, only one strong counter opinion crystallised and was admitted to be of some consequence. That was that the thirteen plays ascribed to Bhāsa were just the creations of the professional actors of the Kerala stage, known as Cākyārs.

It is an historical fact that under Kulaśekharavarman of the 10th century, there was a reform and revival of the Kerala stage. Kulaśekharavarman himself is credited with the authorship of two Sanskrit plays. It is also on record that some of these professional actors, called Cākyārs in Malayalam, also wrote Sanskrit plays, besides their usual stock-in-trade of recasting old classical plays, partially or otherwise, for their stage-versions. A drama called *Traivikrama* was written by a Cākyār called Nīlakaṇṭha and *Dāmaka-Prahasana* was a compilation by Cākyārs. So it was contended that the thirteen Trivandrum plays—this was the appellation used by the scholars of the anti-Bhāsa camp, who would not call them Bhāsa-plays!—were the handiwork of these Cākyārs. The grammatical solecisms in the plays, of which

Ganapati Sastri had made capital as a strong confirmatory evidence for the remote near Pāṇinian antiquity of Bhāsa, were easily explained away by these scholars as products of the loose style and inadequate Sanskrit equipment of the Cākyārs. Profs. K.R. Pisharoti and A.K. Pisharoti, Dr. C. Kunhan Raja, (all scholars of Kerala), Prof. M. Ramakrishna Kavi, MM. Prof. S. Kuppuswami Sastri, MM. Dr. P.V. Kane, Dr. C.R. Devadhar and foreign savants like Dr. Sylvain Lèvi and Dr. A.C. Woolner, were some of the great scholars who opposed the ascription to Bhāsa and held the Trivandrum plays to be spurious. Not that the pro-Bhāsa camp languished for want of support. It too included equally great names like MM. Haraprasad Shastri, Dr. Laxman Sarup, Dr. S.K. Belvalkar, Dr. V.S. Sukthankar, Prof. K.H. Dhruva, Dr. K.P. Jayaswal, Dr. V.R.R. Dikshitar, and also foreign stalwarts like Dr. A.B. Keith, Dr. Sten Konow, Dr. F.W. Thomas, Dr. Hermann Jacobi and Dr. M. Winternitz.

In fact, this Bhāsa-problem resulted in a clear "polarisation" in academics too and divided orientalists, both of the east and west, into two distinct camps, branded as pro-Bhāsite and anti-Bhāsite. No scholar worth his salt could then stand in isolation in the alignment that followed. There was a veritable tug of war, in which the scholar-giants stood in a kind of battle array, ever alert to sustain their position. In this battle of wits, scholars discovered and brandished some new argument every time, which would either shift the fulcrum of oscillation towards their side or take the wind out of the opponent's sails. It is neither possible nor necessary to go into every thing that was said and written on this engaging and highly interesting controversy. The pages of oriental journals of this period bristle with arguments and charges, replies and counter-replies of scholars belonging to the rival camps, so much so, that it sometimes generated much heat and emotions ran high. To take but one instance, Prof. S.M. Paranjape could not tolerate the very thought of ascribing the superb creations of a dramatic genius to the anonymous mediocrities drawn from the Keralite Cākyārs and was spitting fire when he wrote: "The desecrating vandalism of the literary thieves of Kerala may certainly be able to mangle and mutilate old plays; but they can never build up a new superstructure of the delicacy of a *Svapnavāsavadatta* or the grandeur of a *Pratimā*." It is on account of this heat that this controversy had generated that Dr. Keith thought it fit to add a special world of commendation for the even tenor of Dr. Pusalker's book *Bhāsa—A Study* and wrote of Pusalker in the Preface that "he has remembered the duty of treating with courtesy, views which he does not share" and gave the further counsel to future writers "that his example in this regard may be followed in subsequent investigations."

Be it as it may, this vivacious controversy—which occasionally did become vitriolic—proved to be a blessing in disguise for the newly reborn Bhāsa. Bhāsa studies gained a fresh impetus and a new momentum. Some of the best intellects analysed every part and dissected every piece of Bhāsa's writings with all the incisive penetration and critical acumen they were capable of. This was a distinct gain for Bhāsa--studies, for in this process, nothing escaped the microscopic scrutiny of the minutest limbs in the anatomy of the reborn Bhāsa.

The beauty of the whole controversy was—as it happens to be with all such academic controversies—that scholars on both sides felt fully convinced that their arguments were conclusive and quite adequate to clinch the issue. Here are two random samples. Writing with a tinge of taunting sarcasm, MM Kuppuswami Sastri (of the anti-Bhāsite school) wrote thus of the pro-Bhāsite arguments and the wrong ascription to Bhāsa: "In this connection, it must be stated, though it may be looked upon as an act of impious heresy, that the arguments so far advanced with reference to the Bhāsa controversy by the learned editor of the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series and those who have swallowed some of his views are jejune and inconclusive and, in some places, wholly untenable." He also lent the weight of his highly respected authority and welcomed approvingly the suggestion, made by a Keralite scholar, to rename the *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakra* as Kerala-nāṭaka-cakra or Cākyār-nāṭaka-cakra and sounded a clear warning, although well-intentioned, to scholars to disabuse their minds of their misplaced flair for erecting an Indological idol for Bhāsa through his plays, so-called!

Espousing the opposite view, Dr. Pusalker wrote with equally strong fervour after years of painstaking study and research in his comprehensive study on Bhāsa, the best and most authoritative book, so far produced on Bhāsa: "Thus, all the above arguments would strongly and conclusively establish, it is hoped, that these plays are original compositions and cannot be called compilations or adaptations by any amount of provincialism or flight of imagination. Minor changes are inevitable and might have been introduced by the Cākyārs for conveniences of the stage. But that does not rob Bhāsa of the authorship of these plays."

It is not at all surprising, therefore, that even after perusing Dr. Pusalker's "reasoned case" for the pro-Bhāsa conclusion, Dr. Keith was constrained to remark in his Preface to the same book that "there seems to be but slight chance of the protoganists on either side convincing their opponents." Though Keith's remark was substantially true when he made it (i.e., in 1940), it must be conceded that there has subsequently been a strong swing of the balance—at least in India—in favour of Bhāsa. The current trend is to take the thirteen plays as the genuine works of the illustrious Bhāsa of the pre-Kālidāsa epoch with such omissions or corruptions in the text, as were inevitable in the transmission of such works of remote antiquity through twenty or twenty-five centuries, during which period, the country had passed through many political upheavals, cultural ups and downs and even religious holocausts.

Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar, a renowned Civilian and a member of our High Court Judiciary, who was also a scholar and writer of repute and had made an in-depth study of all aspects of this vexed problem for his book *Bhāsa*, has pronounced his verdict in favour of Bhāsa, after fully weighing all the available evidence, for and against. This great judge—who, incidentally, also hailed from Kerala—gives the Keralite Cākyārs their due for having carefully preserved the classical dramas of Bhāsa in their Malayalam script but insists that the Cākyārs could be nothing more than caretakers of Bhāsa's works. He has, further, admonished the "overzealous critics" of the anti-Bhāsite school for their wrong contention that "these caretakers constructed the temple!" The Bhāsa-authorship case has thus been taken, as it were, to the bar of a High Court and settled in favour of Bhāsa! With this verdict of a renowned justice before us, we will be doing no damage to the cause of Truth, if we assume, if only for the purpose of this popular study, that the controversy is closed and settled in favour of Bhāsa and that the thirteen plays in their present form are the genuine and authentic works of Bhāsa.

3

Life and Date

yātās-te rasa-sāra-saṅgraha-vidhiṁ niṣpīḍya niṣpīḍya ye
vāk-tattvekṣu-latāṁ purā katipaye tattva-spṛśaś-cakrire /
jāyante-'dya yathāyathaṁ tu kavayas-te tatra saṁtanvate
ye-'nuprāsa-kaṭhora-citra-yamaka-śleṣādi-śālkoccayam //
—Maṅkha, *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*

> Gone are the stalwart poets of the golden days of old, who felt the pulse of the Muses, had personal taste of the pith and marrow of Poetry and squeezed and squeezed the sublime Word-Principle like the sugarcane and released bounteous streams of the ineffable Rasa. And poets are born now too, who only revel in collecting its dryasdust remnants—hard and sapless verbal tricks like alliterations, jingles, puns, conundrums and puzzles and wordy feats of tongue-twisters and brain-teasers like anagrams and palindromes.

Bhāsa's life

Voluntary self-effacement is a typical characteristic of all the great masters, who practised the arts in ancient India. This is true as much of those who wielded the pen as of those who plied the chisel and the brush. Whoever knows anything of the hands that painted the Ajanta frescoes or infused life and beauty into the still rocks of Ellora and Konark? Fame, the weakness of the great, tempted not the creators of our immortal art-treasures. They did care for the perpetuation of their creations; but cared little for passing on to posterity any vestiges of their individual personalities. Possibly, they realised and lived the great truth that all great art is an expression of the collective and universal aesthetic sensibility and the individual is nothing more than an infinitesimal speck, serving as a fortuitous medium.

In tune with this great tradition, which is just a corollary of ancient India's vision of the values of life, our great literary writers too said precious little of themselves in their works and perhaps never encouraged even their disciples or close associates to write about them. This explains why India never produced a Boswell for her Kālidāsa or Śaṅkarācārya.

Biographies, still less autobiographies, were foreign to ancient Indian thinking. As a result, we are left with no historical details about our great writers of the past; Bhāsa not excluded. And what we do have in a few cases, partakes more of the nature of myth and legend than of real history. Pāṇini, the most incisive grammarian the world ever saw; Yāska, the author of the most ancient work in the world on Philology and Etymology; the great ṛṣis of the Vedic age, who have bequeathed to us the earliest known literary monuments of the world; the old Manu, the founder of Dharmaśāstra; Śaṅkarācārya, one of the tallest philosophers, who trod the earth; Varāhamihira, the father of scientific Astronomy and Astrology in India; Āryabhaṭa, the founder of the Decimal-place system of numbers, which silently revolutionised the advances in Mathematics; Vyāḍi, the great scientist; and lastly Vālmīki, Vyāsa and Kālidāsa, whose literary creations are the pride of our nation, are all, in a very literal sense, mere names to us today. Pāṇini, has not left even his name anywhere in his work. Such indifference to personal fame is seen in more or less degrees in all our ancient great. There is, in fact, no real guarantee—though it is taken for granted—that the colophons of the works, found appended in the Mss. were actually written by the authors themselves. It is not improbable that they were added subsequently by those who lived with the writers and knew them or even by later scribes, who preserved the works.

Bhāsa's reticence about himself is total. Later dramatists whispered at least their names to their contemporary and future audiences through the conversation of the Sūtradhāra and his assistant in the conventional prologues to their plays. However, unlike Kālidāsa and others, who came in his wake, Bhāsa did not care to record for posterity even his name in the prologues, which are invariably very brief and conform to a set pattern; typically Bhāsa's. We are, therefore, left with the Hobson's choice of squeezing whatever information is possible about Bhāsa, the man, out of the scanty and uncommunicative external references to him and his works in the writings of later poets or critics. Likewise, we have to subject Bhāsa's plays themselves to a searching internal scrutiny to piece together such material as is available for getting at least a hazy picture of the mental and spiritual sides of his personality: his provenance, his upbringing and education, his qualities of head and heart, the values of life he adored or condemned, his opinions on life and its problems or, in other words, his general philosophy of life.

A curious extract from the so-called *Kavivimarśa* of Rājaśekhara set afloat by T.S. Narayana Sastri of Madras speaks of Bhāsa as a washerman by caste and profession. In support of the fact that the gift of poesy was not the monopoly of a favoured few of the higher castes or of those born with silver spoon in mouth, this passage cites the case of Bhāsa, who became a renowned poet, though a proletarian with washerman's blood in his veins.

> *kāraṇaṁ tu kavitvasya na sampanna-kulīnatā /*
> *dhāvako'pi hi yad bhāsaḥ kavīnām-agrimo'bhavat //*

Further on, this extract makes Bhāsa the real author of the three well known plays of Śrī-Harṣa *Ratnāvalī*, *Priyadarśikā*, and *Nāgānanda*, besides two other unheard of plays, *Udāttarāghava* and *Kiraṇāvalī*. It further affirms that king Śri-Harṣa-Vikrama was so delighted with Bhāsa's *Nāgānanda* that he made him his poet-laureate. This information is, no doubt, quite interesting and is, in certain respects, quite unique, as we do not possess any such documented evidence for the caste or profession of any of our other early writers, nay, even later writers. It would have made Bhāsa a washerman by caste and, what is more, that his caste did not act as a barrier to his receiving the honours that were his due for his meritorious achievements in the literary field. True, it would have created a pandemonium and upset many of the accepted facts, dates and chronologies of our literary history, as it would have made Bhāsa, the court-poet of a king Harṣa Vikramāditya of Ujjain of the 6th cent. B.C. and shifted the three Harṣa-plays from the 8th cent. A.D. to the 6th cent. B.C. All the same, for the contemporary social values of our secular democracy, it would have been a revolutionary disclosure too, if only its veracity had been above board.

Fortunately for the cause of truth, the true colours of this so-called quotation stood exposed. Scholars are since satisfied that it was just a piece of cold-blooded forgery; which along with plagiarism, its incestuous cousin, has raised its ugly head at some time or other in the literatures of all countries.

We have, therefore, to scan the works themselves for our knowledge of Bhāsa's true parentage, caste, provenance, education and other accomplishments. The picture of Bhāsa that emerges from his dramas is that of a brāhmaṇa, well versed in all the conventional branches of learning current during his days and having an abiding faith in and reverence for the ancient Vedic religion and its basic scriptures, the Vedas, the Kalpasūtras, the Epics and the Purāṇas. On the basis of the name Bhāsa, Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar has hazarded the conjecture that "he was a brāhmaṇa of Bhāsa gotra, a branch of Agastya gotra."

Bhāsa's imagery, which frequently draws upon all the varied beliefs and practices of Hinduism is the best proof for this. The superiority of Śruti—the intuition of the ṛṣis—to mere reason, the institution of the Vedic sacrifice and the sacrosanctity of the oblations, the mantras and their accents, have provided themes for many of his similes. The pure, unadorned beauty of the heroine of *Avimāraka* is likened by the hero to the intrinsic holiness of the Veda uncorrupted by reason. Rāvaṇa in *Pratimā* talks of snatching away Sītā like the stream of the oblation, not sanctified by mantras with the right words and the right accents.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*-plays and the *Bālacarita* based on Kṛṣṇa-legend bear witness to Bhāsa's profound acquaintance with the epic and purāṇic literature of his days. There are also a number of allusions to the various incarnations of Viṣṇu and other forms of divinity like Śiva, Skanda and Devī, the last one referred to as Kārtyāyanī (*sic*). According to Ganapati Sastri, there is a reference to Gaṇeśa too; but the learned Sastri nods, for once, in his interpretation of the passage in question. It is highly interesting to note that Bhāsa was acquainted with even the integrated form of Śiva and Pārvatī, known as Ardhanārīśvara, which he has brought in to describe a natural scene of rare beauty. The evening sky with the eastern half, dark blue with the gathering darkness and the western half, crimson red with the spreading halo of the setting sun takes on, says the dramatist, the beauty of the "nīla-lohita" form of Ardhanārīśvara. We have also a picture of Nārada pleasing Brahmā with his chanting of the Veda and sending Viṣṇu into ecstacy through his musical melodies.

These poetic images not only prove the early development of the related purāṇic concepts, but also shed useful light on Bhāsa's religious beliefs and his freedom from sectarian bias. Though a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu as attested by the numerous benedictory prayers in the dramas to the different forms of Viṣṇu, Bhāsa did adore Śiva and Skanda too. In this respect, he was, like Kālidāsa and other poets who followed, a true representative of the early phase of Hindusim of the Smṛtis, which advocates total catholicity in matters of worship, adopted and propagated in later days by Śaṅkarācārya, who is aptly described on this account, as a Śākta within, a Śaiva in exterior appearance and a Vaiṣṇava in assemblies referring respectively to his Devī *upāsanā* through Śrī-Vidyā, his outward form with the *tripuṇḍra* mark of the Śaiva and the sacred word "Nārāyaṇa" playing on his lips while blessing his devotees—practices which still distinguish the Śaṅkarācāryas of today.

Bhāsa's personal religion was, in all probability, the ancient Pāñcarātra school of Vaiṣṇavism, according to which Kṛṣṇa as Vāsudeva is the supreme principle. The name *Pañcarātra* given by Bhāsa to one of his plays, the drama *Bālacarita* glorifying the exploits of Kṛṣṇa the frequent adoration of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa in the plays and the prayer to Balarāma in the nāndī-śloka of *Svapnavāsavadatta*—all these provide tell-tale evidence for Bhāsa's personal affinity for the Pāñcarātra tenets. Bhāsa was also a believer in idol-worship, the undeservedly maligned institution of ancient Hinduism. The existence of temples for worship of gods and goddesses, the installation of idols in human form, the practice of daily routine worship and special worship during festivals in temples—all these find mention in Bhāsa's plays.

Belief in the existence and wide supernatural powers of semidivine *devayonis* like Vidyādharas, Gandharvas etc.; in the efficacy of *śrāddha* and *tarpaṇa* to please the manes of departed ancestors; in the dying man's vision of his dead ancestors during his last moments; in the existence of spirits and goblins and their interference with the lives of humans; in the supernatural power of curses and boons uttered by Brahmarṣis, demi-gods and gods; in the miraculous powers of charmed amulets, rings and the like for making men invisible or visible at will—all these were part of Bhāsa's faith, which he shared with the people of his age.

Bhāsa had implicit faith in the Hindu scheme of *varṇāsrama* too. There are scores of references in the plays speaking of the position of importance of and reverence assigned to the brāhmaṇas in society. To Kaṁsa in *Bālacarita*, the word of a brāhmaṇa is true, though it be false. Karṇa in *Karṇabhāra* bows down before the word of a brāhmaṇa and agrees to accept the śakti from Indra in exchange for his *kavaca-kuṇḍala*. The temple priest in *Pratimā* prohibits the supposed brāhmaṇa from bowing before the statues of kṣatriyas. The ideal king should surrender all his wealth at the feet of the brāhmaṇas and leave only his bow for his children. All such references are, incidentally, clear pointers of Bhāsa himself being a brāhmaṇa.

A word may be said about Bhāsa's artistic sensibilities in general and his attitude towards Art, in particular. The following dialogue from *Cārudatta* furnishes an interesting peep-hole into Bhāsa's mind *vis-a-vis* the principle of "Art for Art's sake", which governs the creation and appreciation of all great Art.

SHAMPOOER : Madam, Pāṭalīputra is my birth-place. By nature, as well as nurture, I am a tradesman; but by the vicissitudes of Fortune, I have taken to the profession of a shampooer.

VASANTASENĀ : Oh fine! You are a shampooer then? Indeed, you have learnt a really delicate Art.

Shampooer : Quite so, Madam. I did learn it as an Art. But, alas! it has now become my trade.

In this pithy reply of the shampooer, we see Bhāsa, the lover of pure Art, adoring the arts for the sheer love of them and decrying the desecrating sale of Art for pecuniary profit.

It will be proper to conclude this brief view of Bhāsa, the man with the findings of Dr. G.K. Bhat regarding Bhāsa's histrionic abilities and talents as a director of plays. Dr. Bhat bases his conclusions on his refreshingly original interpretation of the punning epithets employed by Bāṇa in his verse, describing Bhāsa's plays and equating them with temples. According to Dr. Bhat, Bhāsa was "personally concerned" with the staging of his plays "either as director, who trained the actors for various roles or as an actor himself, who performed several roles in his own plays." This is Dr. Bhat's novel interpretation of the expression *bahubhūmika* in the verse.

Dr. Bhat, likewise, squeezes out information about the personal life of Bhāsa from the expression *sapatāka* too in the same verse. Patākā or banner, according to him, "is a symbol of reward given to the successful actor for his acting abilities and for dramatic production, adjudged as the best." This would mean that "Bhāsa must have won several awards at the royal hands in competitive dramatic performances."

As for the home of Bhāsa, the prevailing atmosphere of all the plays without exception leaves us in no doubt that he lived and worked in the India, north of the Vindhyas. Mention has already been made of the history, geography and topography of north India clearly reflected in his writings and the conspicuous absence in them of any historical, geographical, political or sociological conditions, which could be described as typically southern.

Though the advocates of the Cākyār theory have tried to smell Keralite influences in some of the customs described in the plays and sometimes even in select words of Bhāsa's vocabulary, it has been more or less firmly established that such conclusions are built on sand. If we look at it with dispassionate eyes, the conclusion is irresistible that Bhāsa's home must have been somewhere in the country between the Himālayas and the Vindhyas, though it may be difficult to narrow down the region or pinpoint the place.

For those who understand and respond to the argument of Poetry, the poignant feeling enshrined in Bhāsa's beautiful phrase *himavad-vindhya-kuṇḍalā* gives the final verdict in the matter. It is impossible to put in black and white all that is contained in this elusive phrase of matchless poetic charm coined by Bhāsa in a mood of inspired height and fondly repeated in the concluding prayers of many of his plays. This magic phrase is a fine instance of the infinite range of the suggestive word (*dhvani*), which Ānandavardhana has beautifully defined as one, which has captured such immense power and treasured up such infinite beauty that it is impossible to express it all through any manner of language. Bhāsa's catch-word *himavad-vindhya-kuṇḍalā* breathes not only the poetic fervour but also the personal warmth of one, who loved his country. To the responsive *sahṛdaya*, this fine phrase tells wistful tales of Bhāsa's patriotic spirit and artistic sensibilities, which admired the beauty of his motherland's beaming face and longed to muse over the majestic grace it assumed with the Himālayas and the Vindhyas at its northern and southern tips as glittering ear-pendants on either side. In my opinion, the poet in Bhāsa immortalised the hidden proof for his home-land in his favourite phrase '*himavad-vindhya-kuṇḍalā*'. Genius, it is said, never repeats itself. Bhāsa has not repeated himself either. But even he could not resist repeating his *himavad-vindhya kuṇḍalā* !

Bhāsa's date

"All dates given in Indian literary history are pins set up to be bowled down again." This very interesting remark about the uncertainties of dates,and chronologies of Indian literary history was made by Whitney, the American orientalist, in the year 1879. A full century has elapsed since then and oriental research, including historical studies, has taken long strides during this period. Epigraphists have discovered and studied thousands of inscriptions bearing precise dates throwing light on the names and dynasties of reigning kings and the territories, over which they ruled. The archaeologist's shovel with the invaluable assistance of scientific advances in radio-carbon dating have fixed many a date of India's ancient past with commendable certainty. But in spite of all this, Whitney's observation remains substantially true even to this day and dates of Indian authors continue to oscillate between centuries. Bhāsa is no exception. Scholarly labour has still not succeeded to decide conclusively even the century in which he lived, let alone narrowing down the limits to decades or years.

Leaving aside mushroom theories, the opinions of scholars may be divided under two broad spectra within which Bhāsa's date fluctuates. This broad divergence is itself due to the two different trends of opinion still current regarding the date of Kālidāsa, one placing him in the 1st. cent. B.C. along with the traditional Vikramāditya of Ujjain and the other in the golden age of the Guptas with Candragupta II, who ruled from 375 to 414 A.D. and also assumed the title of Vikramāditya. Corresponding to these two theories regarding the date of Kālidāsa, Bhāsa is placed by some between the 5th and 4th cent B.C., whereas others bring him down to the period between the 2nd and 3rd cent. A.D.

The definite lower limit for the date of Bhāsa is the reference by Kālidāsa in his *Mālavikāgnimitra*, already mentioned:

> *prathita-yaśasāṁ bhāsa-saumilla-kaviputrādīnāṁ prabandhān atikramya vartamāna-kaveḥ kālidāsasya kriyāyāṁ kathaṁ bahumānaḥ /*

Here we have an undisputed reference to Bhāsa from the pen of Kālidāsa. There is another reference in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* too, which can, indeed, serve to push the lower limit up to the 4th cent. B.C. But unfortunately it is not so uncontroversial as the reference by Kālidāsa. Kauṭilya has quoted two verses of an earlier writer without mentioning the source. The second of these verses is found almost verbatim in Bhāsa's *Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa*. In Bhāsa's play, the verse is used to exhort soldiers to be true to their salt and fight heroically for their master's cause. Bhāsa's verse runs as follows:

navaṁ śarāvaṁ salilaiḥ supūrṇaṁ
susaṁskṛtaṁ darbha-kṛtottarīyam /
tattasya mā bhūnnarakaṁ sa gacched
yo bhartṛ-piṇḍasya kṛte na yuddhyet //

The context in Kauṭilya is also identical. He emphasises the need to encourage and enthuse soldiers on the eve of war through ministers and priests and cites the two verses in support. The source of the first verse, which sings of the glories of patriotic soldiers who sacrifice their lives in battle, is not known. The second is taken bodily from *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* :

navaṁ śarāvaṁ salilasya pūrṇaṁ
susaṁskṛtaṁ darbha-kṛtottarīyam /
tattasya mā bhūnnarakaṁ ca gacched
yo bhartṛ-piṇḍasya kṛte na yuddhyet //

Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar has given a fine rendering of this śloka in English verse:

> He who eats his master's food and will not fight
> For him, let that wretch ne'r get holy water
> With its coat of sacred darbha grass, or sight
> Of heaven, but go straight to hell, the rotter.

Two things are specially noteworthy in this connection. Kauṭilya has specifically stated that he was quoting from a previous writer. The position of Bhāsa is just the opposite. There is no reason at all to suppose that Bhāsa's penchant for composing verse suddenly failed him and he had recourse to borrow from Kauṭilya or from some other common source, in this single case. Nor is there any parallel instance anywhere else in Bhāsa of his grafting the verses of previous writers on to his works. The Kauṭilya-verse, first pointed out by Ganapati Sastri, thus provides a very solid proof of a pre-Kauṭilya age for Bhāsa, if only we look at it straight as the Mahāmahopādhyāya did.

Kauṭilya was certainly a contemporary of Candragupta Maurya, who ruled in the 4th century B.C. This would take Bhāsa to the 5th cent. B.C. if not earlier, as some margin will have to be allowed for Bhāsa's work to earn the recognition necessary for being cited by Kauṭilya.

The presence of the Bhāsa-verse in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* naturally presents an embarrassing problem to scholars who support the Gupta age for Kālidāsa and, consequently, place Bhāsa in the 2nd or 3rd cent A.D. Since the *Arthaśāstra* definitely belongs to the 4th cent. B.C. and is anterior to Bhāsa according to these scholars, they turn the tables on their opponents and say that the borrower in this case is Bhāsa and not Kauṭilya. According to them, the source of Kauṭilya is not Bhāsa but possibly some Smṛti or Purāna, now lost. As for Bhāsa, he might have taken it either from Kauṭilya or directly from Kauṭilya's original source.

This explanation speaks for itself and needs no comment. As observed earlier, it is a travesty of reason to suppose that Bhāsa borrowed this single verse and quietly incorporated it into his drama. The fact of the matter is, these scholars were reluctant to give up their pet theory of a post-Christain age for Bhāsa and found themselves in a blind alley when faced with Bhāsa's verse in Kauṭilya. This is a clear instance of matching forced reasoning to a pre-conceived conclusion, instead of following the compulsions of logic to their natural end.

If Kauṭilya thus provides the lower limit for the age of Bhāsa, the upper limit is provided by Buddha. There is a clear reference to Buddhist monks, who are exposed to ridicule by the brāhmaṇa Vidūṣaka in *Cārudatta.* On the very night of the burglary in Cārudatta's house, the Vidūṣaka is described as apprehending danger. Conversing with Cārudatta inside the house, he says that he was not getting sleep like a *Śākya-śramaṇaka* who has an appointment with a servant-maid.

> *ahaṃ khalu tāvat kartavyakara-strī-kṛta-saṅketa iva śākya-śramaṇako nidrāṁ na labhe.*

Likewise, there are also disparaging references to Digambara Jainas in *Avimāraka*, where the Vidūṣaka makes fun of naked *śramaṇakas* and also uses the word *nagna-śramaṇikā* as a term of abuse. The mention of nakedness as a typical characteristic of Jain monks indicates a period before the great schism, which divided the Jain community and ushered in the Śvetāmbara sect. This happened in about 300 B.C.

All these references not only prove that the plays were written after Buddha but also indicate that it was a time not far removed from Buddha, when Buddhism and Jainism had still not struck deep roots in society and had not gained very high respectability. Otherwise, such public jokes at the expense of Buddhist and Jain monks would not have been tolerated by the audience.

Besides these direct references to Buddhist and Jain monks, Bhāsa's plays mention Nāgavana, Veṇuvana, Rājagṛha and Pātalīputra, "all of which rose into prominence after Buddha's time." These are also clear pointers of a post-Buddha age for the Bhāsa plays. Ganapati Sastri's suggestion of a pre-Buddha date for Bhāsa has, therefore, to be taken with a pinch of salt!

An interesting reference to a number of śāstraic treatises in *Pratimā-nāṭaka* also confirms the antiquity of Bhāsa's plays. Rāvaṇa disguised as a venerable brāhmaṇa speaks of the various branches of learning in which he was well versed. *Mānavīya-dharma-śāstra, Yoga-śāstra* of Maheśvara, *Artha-śāstra* of Bṛhaspati, *Nyāya-śāstra* of Medhatithi and *Śrāddhakalpa* of Pracetas are all mentioned. Though scholars are not agreed on the identification of the authors and treatises of a remote age mentioned here to create an atmosphere of antiquity by the dramatist, still the consensus of opinion is that all these works may safely be placed prior to the 6th century B.C. The cumulative force of all these available evidences, internal as well as external, observes Dr. Pusalker rightly, clearly point to a pre-Mauryan period for the plays between the

5th and 4th cent. B.C. According to this view, Bhāsa lived during the reign of Mahāpadma Nanda, who was the first known historical ruler to bring the whole of north India under his sway.

Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar, however, places Bhāsa during the Mauryan age. In his opinion, Bhāsa was "a senior contemporary of Kauṭilya . . . and belonged to the 4th cent. B.C. and lived in the days of Candragupta Maurya." He sees a number of oblique allusions to contemporary events in the Bhāsa plays. According to him, Yaugandharāyaṇa is a covert representation of Cāṇakya and in his *pratijñā* there is an echo of Cāṇakya's great vow. The *śramaṇaka* in *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* could be the Jaina monk Jīvasiddhi, who helped Cāṇakya. The prayers for the defeat of foreign armies in the *bharatavākyas* could also be a reference to the invading hordes of Seleukos Nikator. All these novel suggestions are highly original and seem very interesting and plausible too. But in the absence of other positive independent evidence, it is not safe to rely on such oblique references alone for arriving at conclusions of history.

It will, therefore, be safe to conclude until any decisive proof to the contrary is unearthed by future research that Bhāsa lived somewhere between the two clear landmarks, Buddha and Kauṭilya, nearer the former than the latter. Hence, the nearest possible approximation for the date of Bhāsa in the present state of our knowledge should be put down as the early 5th cent B.C.

4

Works: Bird's-eye View

devānāṁ idam āmananti munayaḥ kāntaṁ kratuṁ cākṣuṣaṁ
rudreṇedam umākṛta-vyatikare svāṅge vibhaktaṁ dvidhā /
traiguṇyodbhavam atra lokacaritaṁ nānārasaṁ dṛśyate
nāṭyaṁ bhinna-rucer-janasya bahudhāpyekaṁ samārādhanam //
—Kālidāsa, *Mālavikāgnimitra*

> Sages extol the art of drama and dance to the skies as a novel form of sacrifice to the gods, at once beautiful and soothing to the eyes (unlike the traditional ritual, where smoke obtrudes on the eye!). Lord Śiva himself has commended it by taking its twin forms—*tāṇḍava* and *lāsya*—on his own person integrated with Umā as Ardhanārīśvara. It holds the mirror up to the infinite forms of life in the world, with its diverse behaviour and complex emotions. For sure, Nāṭya is the only multi-dimensional entertainment with universal appeal, in this world of varied tastes and tempers.

It is an established practice of the dramatists of the world that they prefer to erect the edifices of their plays on the foundations of well known stories, current among the people; rather than weave an altogether new fabric, all their own, as writers of fiction do. The reason behind this is simple. An old well-known story lends itself more easily to the creation of dramatic effect. Startling departures introduced by the dramatist spring a sudden surprise on the spectators, screw up their interest and keep them on their toes, with "poised expectancy", which according to J.T. Shipley, is the essence of suspense, which, in turn, is the essence of drama.

Bharata, the father of Indian dramaturgy, recognised this basic principle of drama. Of the ten major types of dramas, classified and discussed by him *in extenso,* all but one, have plots, drawn from history or other well known chronicles or tales.

True to this deep-rooted Indian tradition—or more correctly, world tradition—of drama, Bhāsa drew upon the epics and contemporary lore for the plots of his thirteen plays. Two plays derive their plots from

Rāmāyaṇa, six from *Mahābhārata*, one from Kṛṣṇa legend (this could not have been the present *Śrīmad-Bhāgvata*, as the latter belongs to a considerably later age), two from the history of the recent past and the remaining two from popular tales. From the standpoint of their sources, the plays are usually classified thus.

I. *Rāmāyaṇa* plays
  (1) *Abhiṣeka- nāṭaka*
  (2) *Pratimā*
II. *Mahābhārata* and Kṛṣṇa legend plays
  (3) Dūtavākya
  (4) *Karṇabhāra*
  (5) *Dūtaghaṭotkaca*
  (6) *Ūrubhaṅga*
  (7) *Madhyama-vyāyoga*
  (8) *Pañcarātra*
  (9) *Bālacarita*
III. Historical or Udayana plays
  (10) *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*
  (11) *Svapnavāsavadatta*
IV. Legendary or Fiction plays
  (12) *Avimāraka*
  (13) *Cārudatta*

Many other dramas having some of the typical characteristics of these plays were also suspected to be Bhāsa's. Some of them were actually palmed off on Bhāsa. Of these, *Yajñaphala*, published from Gujarat in 1941 on the basis of two Devanāgarī Mss., was long held to be a genuine Bhāsa-play by many scholars, including even Dr. Pusalker. There are, in fact, two independent traditions, according to which Bhāsa is said to have written twenty-three or thirty plays. It is not improbable at all that Bhāsa wrote more plays besides the thirteen plays now recovered from Kerala. But all the same, the claim of *Yajñaphala* to such a title has not been vindicated. Since we shall advert to this problem of *Yajñaphala* later, it need not detain us here now.

The *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka* dramatises in six acts the Rāmāyaṇa story closely following Vālmīki, commencing from the Vāli-Sugrīva fight and ending with the coronation (*abhiṣeka*) of Rāma in Laṅkā by the gods. The play also touches on the *abhiṣeka* of Sugrīva after Vālin's death at the end of Act I. Rāma is not portrayed in this play as a mere mortal but as a full-fledged incarnation of Viṣṇu. The *Pratimā* in seven Acts is the later and decidedly superior play on the Rāmāyaṇa theme. It derives its title from the novel scene of the statute-house (*pratimā-gṛha*) created by Bhāsa's fancy. The *pratimā-gṛha* scene is a unique creation of Bhāsa and serves as a lever to elevate the character of Kaikeyī—this being the central aim of the play—besides being a fine example of Bhāsa's masterly handling of pathos. The play starts with the abortive coronation of Rāma and its sudden suspension by the direct intervention of Mantharā. It rushes through select incidents of Rāma's story and concludes with Rāma's return from Laṅkā and his final coronation.

Dūtavākya dramatises the well known *Mahābhārata* episode of Kṛṣṇa's embassy to the Kaurava capital and his unsuccessful effort to persuade Duryodhana to give the Pāṇḍavas their legitimate share of the kingdom. The epic episode is presented in the same form without any departure either in the story element or in the portrayal of character. The minor innovations introduced are dictated by the needs of dramatic form. *Karṇabhāra* too is another one-Act play, laid in the battle-field of Kurukṣetra, which adds little to the *Mahābhārata* story of Karṇa's giving away his congenital armour and ear-rings to the disguised Indra. Bhāsa has elevated the character of Karṇa by subtle touches. Though *Dūtaghaṭotkaca* is also an one-Act play with a *Mahābhārata* theme, it is different from others in this, that the embassy of Ghaṭotkaca described here is a creation of Bhāsa's imagination. Ghaṭotkaca is sent by Kṛṣṇa to Dhṛtarāṣṭra with a message of warning that the ruthless killing of Abhimanyu was going to boomerang upon the Kauravas with a hundred-fold force and advising him to muster up all his soul-force and prepare himself for the impending catastrophe of the massacre of his hundred sons. *Madhyama-vyāyoga* too is, likewise, a product of Bhāsa's inventive genius. The meeting of Ghṭotkaca with his father Bhīma and the combat between father and son is the central theme. This is closely linked with the sub-plot of a brāhmaṇa couple, who are forced to offer their middle son (*madhyama*) to Ghaṭotkaca as food for his demon-mother Hiḍimbā. Bhīma, who chances to come there, goes to the rescue of the brāhmaṇa youth. Bhīma too is the *madhyama* of the Pāṇḍavas. Thus the hero's encounter with the two *madhyamas* justifies the title of the play. *Ūrubhaṅga*, describing the tragic death of Duryodhana at the hands of Bhīma, who pounds the former's thigh with his mace in the last lap of the Mahābhārata war is a unique play, as it is one of the few indubitable instances of tragedy in the Aristotelean sense, in the whole range of Sanskrit drama. *Bālacarita* is a five-Act play based mainly on the miraculous and violent feats of Kṛṣṇa during his childhood, culminating in the killing of Kaṁsa and the restoration of the kingdom to his father Ugrasena. The episodes as dramatised by Bhāsa differ in some respects from the accounts available in *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṁśa* on the one hand and the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* and *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, on the other. In the three-Act play *Pañcarātra*, Bhāsa returns to the *Mahābhārata* theme. This is the only full length *Mahābhārata* play and has for its central theme the episode of the seizing of cattle (*go-grahaṇa*) of *Virāṭaparvan*; but Bhāsa has given a new look to the whole story by his innovation of the five-day condition, set by Duryodhana for discovering the Pāṇḍavas to hand over their kingdom back to them. This explains the title *Pañcarātra*. In the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* in four Acts, Bhāsa made his first experiment with the Udayana theme. It is not improbable that its success egged him on to his *Svapnavāsavadatta* on the same theme, though with a difference. The two plays, together make a compact and complete picture, the former dealing with the pre-marriage phase and the latter, the post-marriage phase of the life-story of Udayana. The two solemn vows of Yaugandharāyaṇa to release his master from honourable captivity in Pradyota's capital, Avantī and to arrange for the elopement of princess Vāsavadattā, the latter's daughter too along with him, constitute the pivot of the plot. In the main, it is a play of political intrigue. *Svapnavāsavadatta* in six Acts, pictures the self-denying love of Vāsavadattā for Udayana which impels her to make the most challenging sacrifice, a woman may be called upon to make, of willingly acquiescing with the intrusion of a rival woman in her love. Political intrigue plays its role in this play too but there is a clear shift in emphasis here. If *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* is a play of political intrigue closely intertwined with the thrilling adventures of romantic love-making, *Svapnavāsavadatta* is an immortal saga of dedicated love set in the hard frame work of political intrigue. *Avimāraka*, a drama in six Acts described by Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar as "the *Romeo and Juliet* of Bhāsa" is based on contemporary folk-lore and describes the romantic love of Avimāraka for the princess Kuraṅgī. The hero is under the spell of a curse, as a result of which, he has to remain an outcaste for a year, during which period the amorous adventures take place. The play concludes with the usual auspicious note of the end of the curse and the union of the lovers in happy wed-lock after the barriers are cleared. *Cārudatta* is the second play based on folklore, probably traceable to *Bṛhatkathā*, dealing with the pure love of the courtesan Vasantasenā for the noble but poor brāhmaṇa, Cārudatta. The technique of interweaving a sub-plot with the main plot is followed in this play too by Bhāsa. The brief episode of the love of a brāhmaṇa turned burglar for the courtesan's maid runs as a parallel theme. The play, as we have it, is obviously in an unfinished form.

For the possible chronological sequence in the composition of the plays, we have to look for evidence in the plays themselves. Dr. Pusalker relied mainly on the dialogue-test, that is, the proportion of verses to dialogue, which shows a marked decline, in the more mature plays. Likewise, the weak metrical endings and cases of grammatical irregularities also provided helpful clues to him. Apart from these stylistic tests, which are confined to the external form; the dramatic technique, characterisation, felicity of expression and imagery, which are related to the content, can also serve as useful tests. But opinion is bound to be divided on such issues which are subjective, for the most part.

Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar, placed too much credence on the topical allusions, which he discovered in the treatment of the themes at large and more particularly in the *bharatavākyas* and came to conclusions, different from those of Dr. Pusalker. His conclusions centre round his pet theory that Bhāsa was a contemporary of Cāṇakya and Candragupta and are based on his analysis of the subtle differences in the *bharatavākyas.*

The only safe thing to do under such circumstances will be to broadly divide the dramatist's creative activity into periods of maturity and immaturity and think only in terms of earlier and later plays. If necessary and possible, a transitional period may be added. Even with such a method, it is not possible to be dogmatic about one's opinions. I hold a clearly different opinion regarding the position of *Pañcarātra*, which, I believe, definitely does not, at any rate, deserve to be huddled up with the immature or less mature plays. It is noteworthy that according to Dr. Pusalker's own comparative table, the percentages of poetic licenses and weak endings are lowest in this play. Likewise, even among the one-Act plays, which are usually assigned to the earlier period of apprenticeship, some hold that an exception should be made for *Ūrubhaṅga.* Thus all the five one-Act *Mahābhārata* plays, *Dūtavākya, Karṇabhāra, Dūtaghaṭotkaca, Madhyama-vyāyoga* and *Ūrubhaṅga* along with *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka* and *Bālacarita* may be safely put down as efforts of the early period of his writing career and the remaining six plays *Pañcarātra, Avimāraka, Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa, Pratimā, Svapnavāsavadatta* and *Cārudatta* could be classed as later and more mature plays.

Regarding *Cārudatta*, which is certainly in an unfinished form, it is not possible to say whether it was left incomplete on account of the dramatist's death or the later Acts, though actually written by Bhāsa, were lost in the process of transmission of Mss. The latter alternative appears more plausible to me. *Cārudatta*, in its present form does not bear such marks of excellence, as can make it the most mature product of Bhāsa's dramatic genius. That title of honour will certainly go to *Svapnavāsavadatta*, which is, by all accounts, Bhāsa's *chef-doeuvre*, a fact long recognised by our able critics of the past and recorded, with their characteristic penchant for epigrammatic brevity, in the Rājaśekhara--verse discussed earlier.

5

Rāmāyaṇa Plays

vālmīki-gīta-raghupuṅgava-kīrti-leśais-
tṛptiṁ karomi katham-apyadhunā budhānāṁ /
gaṇgā-jalair-bhuvi bhagīratha-yatna-labdhaiḥ
kiṁ tarpaṇaṁ na vidadhāti naraḥ pitṝṇām //
—Bhoja, *Rāmāyaṇa-Campū*

Hark, my readers wise, my resolve hear;
I pledge to give you all again, delight sheer
With tiny pieces carved of Rāma's epic fame,
Which Vālmīki set, ere long, in mighty frame.
Laugh not in your sleeves at me, it's nothing wrong;
Don't you know, pious men of the world still throng
To please their departed manes with water-libations
Of Gaṅgā-stream, brought by Bhagīratha's privations?

The two *Rāmāyaṇa* dramas *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka* and *Pratimā* taken together dramatise practically the whole story of *Rāmāyaṇa*, except Bālakāṇḍa, Uttarakāṇḍa and the first half of Araṇyakāṇḍa. In the omission of Bālakāṇḍa and Uttarakāṇḍa by Bhāsa, some scholars see a proof for the conclusion of some western textual critics that the original Rāmāyaṇa did not contain these two kāṇḍas; which, they contend, are later additions. According to Meerwarth, Bhāsa "had known only the older or shorter redaction of the epos, which did not include the Bālakāṇḍa, and the Uttarakāṇḍa."

The *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka* opens with the duel between Vālin and Sugrīva; covers Kiṣkindhā, Sundara and Yuddha Kāṇḍas and ends with Rāma's coronation. *Pratimā*, on the other hand, takes up the thread of the Rāma--story from a much earlier point. It includes within its scope the two earlier Kāṇḍas, Ayodhyā and Araṇya too, but concludes with the same coronation of Rāma. Though there is thus considerable overlapping in the areas of the story covered in the two plays, the dramatist has skilfully avoided repetition in the actual incidents presented on the stage. For instance, the fight between Vālin and Sugrīva, which occupies the whole of an Act in *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka,* is skipped completely in *Pratimā* and, *vice versa,* the *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka* skips the whole episode of Sīta's abduction, to which a full Act is assigned in *Pratimā.*

There is an essential point of difference between these two plays. *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka* is practically nothing more than a dramatised version of Vālmīki's epic story with little or no changes in the plot or characterisation. The incidents and persons are all the same; the characters are cast in the same stereotyped mould. The only difference is in respect of the external form. The few minor changes made here and there are not of much consequence, so much so, that Keith dubbed the play as "a somewhat dreary summary of the corresponding books of the Rāmāyaṇa." As against this, Bhāsa had a definite dramatic purpose while writing the *Pratimā.* It is a re-creation by Bhāsa out of Vālmiki's materials, written with the express purpose of removing the stain out of Vālmīki's Kaikeyī and elevating Vālmīki's Bharata still further, making him a bit taller than Rāma himself. Bhāsa has, accordingly, made far-reaching changes in the story in tune with his basic aim of presenting Bharata and Kaikeyī in a totally different perspective. As a result, the play is replete with remarkable innovations, which bring out Bhāsa's inventive genius in full relief. It is, therefore, not correct to say that Bhāsa's aim in writing more than one play on the *Rāmāyaṇa*-theme was just to cover the whole of the epic. Likewise, the suggestion made by some that he must have written more plays on the *Rāmāyaṇa*-story to cover the parts left out by both these plays has, therefore, nothing in it to commend itself.

Another difference of considerable significance between these two plays is that in *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka,* Rāma is portrayed as the incarnation of the supreme God Viṣṇu and is invested with all divine powers. *Pratimā* presents a striking contrast in this respect too and presents Rāma as an ordinary human being throughout and scrupulously eschews episodes, projecting his superhuman powers, the only exception being the reference to the use of *Puṣpaka-vimāna* at the close of the last Act for air-lifting the whole group from Janasthāna to Ayodhyā. As we shall see later, there are compelling evidences to hold that the last Act was written probably in great haste and this explains its perfunctory execution.

With these observations, common to both the *Rāmāyaṇa*-plays, we take up the detailed study of the individual plays.

Abhiṣeka nāṭaka

Since the action proper begins abruptly from the middle of the Rāma-

-story, the dramatist has sought to show off his skill in filling up the gap of the earlier part of the story through the benedictory *nāndī* verse. It is just a trite prayer to Rāma with no poetry or beauty in it and extols him as the destroyer of the *rākṣasa* dynasty. Pointed reference is made in the verse to the incidents of Bālakāṇḍa and Araṇyakāṇḍa, antecedent to the actual dramatic action. Rāma is described as the destroyer of the rākṣasas who tried to desecrate Viśvāmitra's sacrifice; as one who denuded Virādha, Khara and Dūṣaṇa of their might and subdued the haughty Kabandha and Vālin. The omission of Rāvaṇa and all the great rākṣasas of Laṅkā to follow is significant and makes the dramatist's aim very clear. But this apparently skilful attempt to fill the earlier gap is itself puerile and reflects the immaturity of the dramatist. Drama, to be dramatic, has to make an abrupt start, and the actual starting point is determined by considerations of Art. Bhāsa himself was not slow to recognise this fact in his later plays.

The *nāndī-śloka* is followed by the prologue, cast in the typical Bhāsa--mould. There are tumultuous cries from behind the stage. Then comes the announcement that the friendship pact for mutual benefit had been solemnised between the exiled Rāma, whose wife was abducted and Sugrīva, who was deprived of his kingdom and his wife. The commotion, it is reported, was caused by the bustling moves being made to kill Vālin, the lord paramount of the monkeys.

The drama proper then commences with the entry of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa Sugrīva and Hanumān. Rāma reassures Sugrīva about the sure fall of Vālin. Sugrīva replies that he too is convinced about it after having witnessed Rāma's feat of piercing seven *sāla* trees with a single arrow. They all proceed to Kiṣkindhā. Sugrīva challenges Vālin for a fight. Tārā dissuades Vālin; but Vālin sets her fears aside and forces her to withdraw. An open duel ensues. Sugrīva faces reverses, but with a single arrow shot by Rāma, Vālin drops down bleeding. He reads Rāma's name on the arrow and accuses him of treachery. There is a brief altercation, patterned after Vālmīki. Vālin is convinced of his guilt and Rāma assures him that the punishment meted out by him had absolved him of his sin. Vālin is in the throes of death and bars his women from seeing him in that plight.

This apparently innocuous order of Vālin is of special interest to understand Bhāsa's methods and technique. Behind this statement of Vālin—which is a minor deviation from Vālimīki—lies concealed one of the clever tricks of Bhāsa's art of abridging the huge epic and cutting it to size for his drama. Vālmīki devotes full four sargas to Vālin's wife

Tārā, which occupy nearly a half of the total space of the Vālin-Sugrīva conflict in the epic. Bhāsa has successfully skipped it all by this little stroke, employed with great subtlety and sense of propriety too.

Vālin's son Aṅgada is then ushered in by Hanumān. The young son is deeply moved but the dying father puts courage in his soul and counsels fortitude. Vālin asks Sugrīva to forget the past and look after the young Aṅgada without rancour. To Rāma, he addresses a similar request to overlook the unconscious lapses of his brother and son. He then hands over the hereditary heirloom, the precious chain of gold, to Sugrīva. All this done, he prepares for his end and asks Hanumān for water.

There is a quiet dignity and a deep nobility in the personality of Vālin, as it emerges from Bhāsa's picture of his last moments. The way he orders his last affairs and his behaviour towards all, especially Sugrīva, reflect his inherent magnanimity. Even Hanumān—who belonged to the adversary's camp and had no particular love for him—does not miss to see Vālin's greatness, as he lay supine and helpless, but still not divested of his superior qualities, which made him taller than Sugrīva, by head and shoulders. Bhāsa has a fine simile here to describe Vālin, put in the mouth of Hanumān. He lay, says Hanumān, like the majestic Krauñca mountain hit by the invincible *śakti* of the heroic Skanda. That presents a true picture of Vālin's majesty, even at the hour of his fall. Thus, the concept of the tragic hero of western criticism as "a highly renowned and prosperous" person, who is the hapless victim of a "a fatal error" which "brings ruin on him" fits excellently well with Bhāsa's portrayal of Vālin. Bhāsa's picture of the final end has a touch of sublimity about it. Vālin sees mystic visions of the sacred rivers, Gaṅgā and others and of the divine *apsarases* Urvaśī and the rest. And, as Vālin sees before his mind's eye the aerial car driven by a thousand haṁsas for the journey to his *vīra-svarga*, the responsive Indian *sahṛdaya* has feelings similar to what Horatio expresses at the final doom of one of Shakespeare's greatest tragic heroes, Hamlet.

> Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince.
> And flights of angels sing thee to they rest.

If Vālin was great while alive (though Bhāsa has given only stray touches of it), he was equally great in his fall. When all others weep and scream in grief at Vālin's death, Bhāsa's Rāma, with his manifest divinity, calmly confirms that Vālin has reached Heaven. Here closes the first Act, which is the best scene of this play.

A brief interlude introduces two attendants of Sugrīva. The audience learns of Hanumān's feat of crossing the ocean from their conversation. The scene is shifted from Kiṣkindhā to Laṇkā. Sītā is introduced with a brief soliloquy in Rāvaṇa's *aśokavanikā.* She is the picture of poignant grief and deep frustration. Hanumān enters. He talks of his vain bid to look for Sītā in Rāvaṇa's palace. Suddenly, his eyes fall on Sītā surrounded by hideous rākṣasīs. She is like the flash of lightning in the midst of black clouds. It is night. Rāvaṇa enters with his retinue, speaking low of Rāma and makes protestations of love to Sītā. Sītā dismisses it all as trash. Even Rāvaṇa shudders before her superior moral strength. Her simple but vehement trisyllabic reply *śapto'si* (Curst be thou!) totally disarms Rāvaṇa and sends a wave of fear through his veins and he exclaims:

> *ha-ha-ha! aho pativratāyās-tejaḥ!*
>
> *devāḥ sendrādayo bhagnā dānavāś-ca mayā raṇe /*
> *so'haṁ mohaṁ gatosmyadya sītāyās-tribhir-akṣaraiḥ//*
>
> Hush! How great is the power of chastity!
> Hosts of asuras have I, before, crushed in battle;
> And myriad gods too, with Indra and his ilk.
> Ah me, the self-same me, doth now faint
> Before these Sītā's bare letters three!

Obviously, this little couplet painting a powerful picture of Sītā's soul-force so fascinated Bhāsa (and perhaps his spectators too) that he repeated this dialogue with minor changes in the abduction scene of *Pratimā* too.

After Rāvaṇa departs and the rākṣasī-guards are asleep, Hanumān, speaks to Sītā. He gives her news of Rāma to revive her drooping spirits and assures her that Rāma would soon march on Laṅkā with the monkey armies and overthrow Rāvaṇa. All this done, Hanumān resolves to destroy the garden to make his arrival known to Rāvaṇa (Act II).

The third Act opens with the agitated announcement of the news that *aśokavanikā*, the prized treasure of Rāvaṇa and the apple of his eye was reduced to a shambles by an unknown monkey-intruder. Rāvaṇa receives the news with contempt and orders the keeper to catch the animal and bring it before him. The keeper returns saying that all the garden-keepers put together were no match for the monkey, who was a mountain of strength. A thousand soldiers proceed and are finished in no time.

Prince Akṣa is entrusted with the task. Hanumān smashes his chariot and strangles him to death. The dismayed keeper returns and simply asks for more force. He is nervous even to speak of Akṣa's death to Rāvaṇa. Finally, Indrajit brings Hanumān bound to Rāvaṇa's presence. Vibhīṣaṇa is also called in. Hanumān enters nonchalantly and declares that he had only voluntarily submitted to being bound as he was curious to see Rāvaṇa. He announces himself as Rāma's emissary and delivers his message. Vibhīṣaṇa repeatedly tries to wean Rāvaṇa away from fighting with Rāma. But when at last he speaks out his mind that his counsel was prompted by Rāma's superior might, Rāvaṇa could tolerate him no longer. Vibhīṣaṇa is banished and he proceeds to Rāma's camp (Act III).

The scene of action again shifts to Kiṣkindhā. The interlude announces that the monkey army is in battle array. The Act proper opens with Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva and Hanumān on the sea-shore. Vibhīṣaṇa's arrival is announced. Serious doubts are expressed about his credentials. Hanumān allays all fears on the strength of what he had seen of his angelic virtues. He is admitted. The next question is, how to reach Laṅkā. The sea is a barrier for the onward march. Rāma is asked to invoke his powers. Varuṇa, the god of the oceans, arrives on his own. He extols Rāma as Nārāyaṇa incarnate. He is ready to do his bidding. The ocean becomes still and the waters part in the middle. The whole army marches and reaches Laṅkā. Two spies of Rāvaṇa, Śuka and Sāraṇa, in the guise of monkeys are caught red handed; but Rāma lets them off generously with a message to Rāvaṇa.

Thereupon Rāma suggests that it is time for them to go round and inspect the strategic arrangement of the troops. It is evening and the Act closes with a superb description of the setting sun, which holds out excellent promise of the lofty descriptive flights of the future poetic genius.

astādri-mastaka-gataḥ pratisaṁhṛtaṁśuḥ
sandhyānurañjita-vapuḥ pratibhāti sūryaḥ /
raktojjvalāṁśukavṛte dviradasya kumbhe
jāmbūnadena racitaḥ pulako yatheva //

Here is my free version of this beautiful verse: "The round disc of the sun, atop the setting-cliff, with all his rays withdrawn and dyed reddish golden at dusk, set in the background of the red evening sky, looks lovely like the hemispherical ornamented dome of gold, fixed on a carpet of red silk, covering the forehead of a lofty elephant."

Apart from its intrinsic beauty, there is a point of special interest about the simile in this verse. The imagery of the elephant used by the poet here has a special appropriateness for the place and occasion. In the atmosphere of the battlefield where elephants are freely used, an image of this kind fits in readily with the mood of the person and has thus a special psychological appropriateness.

It may also be mentioned in passing that Dr. K.K. Raja, a scholar from Kerala, has an interesting note on the rare word *pulaka* used by Bhāsa in this verse. Dr. Raja is of the opinion that this is a Sanskritisation of the Malayalam word *poḷa* meaning bubble and also used in Malayalam for the bubble made of gold and fixed to the head-dress of elephants. Dr. Raja finds confirmation in this for the Kerala origin of *Abhiṣekanāṭaka* and, on this ground, doubts its authenticity as a work of Bhāsa. (Act IV).

The next Act is laid in Laṇkā. The interlude is highly suggestive of the atmosphere of gloom and despair in Rāvaṇa's household and even of the whispering campaign against him for his obduracy in the matter of not surrendering Sītā. There is a dim hint of the wicked designs of the desperate Rāvaṇa against Sītā. He seeks the assistance of an accomplice Vidyujjihva, an adept in *māyā* to make replicas of Rāma's and Lakṣmaṇa's heads.

The main scene of this Act too like that of the earlier Act (Act II) is laid in Laṇkā and opens with a soliloquy of Sītā. Bhāsa employs the soliloquy here too—as he has done in the earlier Act—to foreshadow the future developments in the Act. In the earlier Act, Sītā's soul witnessed a peculiar wave of peace, which she compared to the sprinkling of water on the furnace in a blacksmith's smithy. That was symbolic of the meeting with Hanumān that followed and proved to be a silver lining in the cloud for her. The position in this Act is different. Here Sītā has already heard of Rāma's arrival in Laṅkā and her heart is in ecstasy. Side by side with this, she senses a sudden agitation too; but there is an overall sense of great peace and relief. In this picture of Sītā's heart with its clash of mixed feelings and their auspicious culmination, Bhāsa has carved the artistic symbol, suggestive of the events of this and the following Acts, concluding with the reunion of Sītā with Rāma and the happy coronation.

Soon after Sītā's soliloquy, Rāvaṇa enters the stage in a pensive mood, also soliloquizing. His mind is torn between two obsessions: the defeat at the hands of Rāma knocking at his door and the carnal craving for Sītā. He tells Sītā that he would kill her dear Rāma that very day.

Just then, Vidyujjihva enters with the supposed heads of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa beheaded by Indrajit. Sītā faints and, on recovery, raves herself hoarse. Rāvaṇa chooses the occasion to heckle her: "By whom will you be saved now?" Just then, someone shouts from behind the stage: "By Rāma! By Rāma!" The accidental juxtaposition breathes new life into Sītā's dying heart. A rākṣasa enters in great excitement and repeats his former cry: "By Rāma. By Rāma." Rāvaṇa frowns furiously upon him for his inopportune intrusion with his stupid words! The rākṣasa apologises for raising the indiscreet cry, heedless of the occasion. However, on being asked by Rāvaṇa, he makes the humble submission that Indrajit was killed by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Rāvaṇa abuses him for his cowardice and dastardly talk of a mere man killing Indrajit. But when the truth of the death of his pet son, the greatest hero of Laṅkā, is confirmed; Rāvaṇa loses his poise and swoons. He recovers later, only to rave his grief and toddle about with confused steps. But his drooping spirits shoot up again as he hears the announcement of Rāma's victorious entry into Laṅkā. In a paroxysm of rage, he proceeds to pull out the entrails of Sītā and offer battle to Rāma, garlanded with Sītā's entrails. But his better sense prevails, on being reminded that killing a woman is an abominable sin. He heeds and proceeds to the battlefield. Sītā stakes all the power of her chastity for Rāma's victory and the Act ends (Act V).

The long interlude to Act VI, also laid in Laṅkā, introduces three Vidyādharas, who witness and describe the fight between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. The narration does project the picture of Rāvaṇa's greatness as a warrior too, but the effort to glorify Rāma is obvious. Reference is also made to the sudden descent from heaven of Indra's chariot driven by Mātali, sent by Indra for Rāma. After a few exchanges of missiles, foiled by each other, Rāma employs the *Brahmāstra*, which kills Rāvaṇa. One of the witnessing Vidyādharas declares that the divine mission (*devakārya*) is at last accomplished.

The Act proper describes the fire-ordeal, voluntarily gone through by Sītā, to prove her immaculate purity, when Rāma hesitates to receive her, despite Vibhīṣaṇa's pleading. Rāma directs Lakṣmaṇa, to do as Sītā desires. Lakṣmaṇa, goes out with Hanumān and returns. As he reports that Sītā is entering the fire, Rāma cries out to stop her. But it is too late. The next moment, Hanumān enters and reports that Sītā has emerged unscathed from the fire with redoubled radiance. Agni, the god of fire, is then ushered into the stage, carrying Sītā. He greets Rāma saying that he (Rāma) was Lord Nārāyaṇa, and requests him to receive Sītā, who is pure and sinless. She was, says Agni to Rāma, Goddess Lakṣmī herself, descended as a mortal. The divine *gandharvas* sing from behind the scenes, glorifying Rāma as the supreme Godhead, recounting his greatness and supremacy among the gods, his measuring the universe in three steps and his present feat of ridding the world of the menace of Rāvaṇa. The songs conclude with the refrain: "Please, Sir, take Sītā back."

Agni, himself, then conducts Rāma to the coronation, which takes place behind the scenes. The gods crown Rāma amidst cries of victory. Rāma re-enters and declares that Daśaratha, from his heavenly abode had directed the coronation. Agni comes back and reports that as per Indra's command, Rāma's subjects with Bharata and Śatrughna at their head, have arrived to greet him. The play closes with the *Bharatavākya*, praying for destruction of the country's enemies and prosperity of the king.

The foregoing Act-wise summary has been given at some length to provide a base for a detailed study of the workings of Bhāsa's art in its earlier phase of development. The overt declarations of Rāma's divinity and the ascription of full divine powers to him, is a distinguishing feature of this play. *Bālacarita*, *Dūtavākya* and *Karṇabhāra* are the only other plays of Bhāsa, where divinity figures in such a conspicuous manner; with the miracles of Kṛṣṇa in the first two and the introduction of Indra and a divine messenger as regular characters in the third.

Of the many places where Rāma's divinity is linked up with the dramatic action in *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka*, the following deserve mention: (1) Varuṇa proclaims that Rāma is Nārāyaṇa, the wielder of the divine weapons *cakra*, *śārṅga* and *gadā* and when Rāma, in the manner of humans, makes obeisance to him, Varuṇa, politely reminds him that *he* was the supreme God and persuades Him not to bow to him; (2) The ocean splits at Varuṇa's bidding to make way for Rāma and his monkey--hosts to pass; (3) Agni too, likewise, politely requests Rāma not to make obeisance to him, as he was the chief of the gods and conducts Rāma to the coronation; (4) The coronation is performed by the Gods. Indra, Yama, Varuṇa and Kubera are reported as standing around Rāma at the coronation; (5) Vālin hopes to be freed of the taint of his sin, on being punished by Rāma and Rāma grants his desire.

Apart from these episodes and incidents, where Rāma's divinity impinges on the action, there are a number of occasions in the play where the supernatural is brought in, as the natural corollary of the introduction of a divine incarnation as the hero of the drama: (1) Indra sends his chariot driven by Mātali to Rāma, while fighting with Rāvaṇa; (2) The dead Daśaratha in Heaven directs the gods to crown Rāma king; (3) The people of Ayodhyā with Bharata at their head are brought to Laṅkā at Indra's behest to felicitate Rāma after the coronation.

Such free and excessive interplay of the supernatural with the actions and feelings of humans, which are the primary concern of any drama, does affect adversely the enjoyment of a drama. However, ancient Indian dramaturgy appears to take a different stand and freely allows divine characters in many of its dramatic types. The free intermingling of human and divine characters has been a regular feature of ancient Greek drama too. This was probably due to the living faith of the ancients in their gods. Even allowing the broadest possible margin for the psychology of the deep abiding religious faith of his contemporary age, for which Bhāsa wrote, it will be idle to deny that this does take away a slice from the human interest of the play. It is highly significant that as his experience gradually ripened and his genius mellowed, the supernatural element in the Bhāsa-plays tapers down until it becomes minimal in plays like *Avimāraka* or *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* and is totally eliminated in *Cārudatta* and *Svapnavāsavadatta*.

The excessive intrusion of the supernatural is thus one of the chief shortcomings of *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka*. For instance, it imposes too much strain on the credulity of the audience to believe that all the subjects of Ayodhyā arrived at Laṅkā with Bharata and Śatrughna in a matter of minutes to felicitate Rāma after the coronation. Bhāsa's expedient of Indra's command to cover up this gross incongruity can satisfy none. To try to defend it on the plea of *nāṭyadharmī* or stage convention will be straining it beyond its natural limits. His sense of propriety appears to have totally failed him, when he took shelter in the supernatural to transport the people of Ayodhyā bodily within two minutes to participate in the coronation in Laṅkā! In fact, the coronation in Laṅkā itself is an ill-conceived departure from the original and serves no dramatic purpose, except to cut the plot short to an immediate conclusion. If the coronation were to be held in Ayodhyā or Nandigrāma, it would have, naturally meant a change of venue and, therefore, addition of another Act. To celebrate the coronation of the king of Ayodhyā in Laṇkā without the people of Ayodhyā would certainly have been a mockery. To conclude Rāmāyaṇa without the coronation of Rāma, particularly after having taken the story to the very end would have been equally ridiculous. Bhāsa's creative powers had apparently reached the end of the tether. He made short shrift of the whole thing by bringing in the gods to his rescue! *Deus ex machina* (god from the machinery) had been an age old conventional device to solve such problems of dramatists of the Greek theatre too, though it has outlived its utility and is bound to be looked upon as an anachronism in the modern context.

There are other minor defects too which have been pointed out by earlier critics. It has been said, for instance, that Bhāsa's defence of Rāma's killing Vālin was weak and unconvincing. No doubt, the charge is quite sustainable. But let us not forget that centuries of Vālmīki-studies have not given a satisfying answer to that unsolved—perhaps, never-to-be-solved—mystery of the stark impropriety of Rāma's striking Vālin from ambush. Then, why blame Bhāsa for his honest attempt? He simply cut the Gordian knot with the sword, as Alexander did!

Another deficiency of this play is its "marked tendency", to use Dr. Pusalker's phrase, for producing cheap sound-effect by devices like alliteration. This is noticeable not only in prose passages, but also in some verses. By and large, this is a clear pointer of the ambitions echoed in the early writings of a poet. In fact, a fine Sanskrit poet of the modern period has beautifully taunted mediocre poets for their misplaced fascination for *śabdacitra* (feats of sound) in poetry by a sarcastic simile, comparing their effort to that of a person who, having reached heaven, thronged by bevies of celestial beauties, was stupidly looking out for a squint-eyed beauty there!

The play has its distinctive merits too, some of them compelling admiration. These early sparks of genius suggest a dramatist of great promise for the future.

Reference has already been made to the superb characterisation of Vālin and of the overall technique of the first Act, which has earned encomiums from many. Dr. Winternitz has called the Act "a little tragedy by itself". There are instances of the beauty of skilfully constructed dialogues in the play. Here is one, as an aid to the furtherance of dramatic action, in the exchanges between Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa, which beautifully lead up to the banishment of the latter:

VIBHĪṢAṆA: May it please your Highness. I wish to tell you a few things, which have a vital bearing on your future welfare.
RĀVAṆA: Go ahead. I too am eager to hear you out.
VIBHĪṢAṆA: I fear, Sir, the days of this rākṣasa family are numbered.
RĀVAṆA: Why?
VIBHĪṢAṆA: Simply because of your Majesty's errors.
RĀVAṆA: What is my error?
VIBHĪṢAṆA: Why, it is quite evident: the abduction of Sītā.

RĀVAṆA: What is wrong in carrying off Sītā?

VIBHĪṢAṆA: *Adharma* besides . . .

RĀVAṆA: Your word and tone indicate, you have something more up your sleeves. Speak it out.

VIBHĪṢAṆA: Oh no, Sir, nothing in particular. That was all I meant.

RĀVAṆA: Vibhīṣaṇa why do you hide? I swear by my life. Come, speak the truth.

VIBHĪṢAṆA: Your Highness! Please first guarantee my life.

RĀVAṆA: I give my word. Proceed.

VIBHĪṢAṆA: B-e-s-i-d-e-s, war with a mightier enemy.

RĀVAṆA: What? How dare you spell out 'mightier enemy' before me? (Angrily)

Fie on this rākṣasa-wretch! How takes he
The enemy's side and talks nonchalantly!
And how audacious should he be
To praise the foe and incense me!

Ho! who is there?

Who has thrown to winds my fraternal love,
And taken side with the enemy low;
The face of that wretch, I shun to see;
Take him off—vile spokesman of enemy!

VIBHĪṢAṆA: Be pleased, your Highness. I shall leave on my own.

This neat and compact dialogue, where each succeeding step flows from the previous with supreme ease and naturalness, is worthy of any of the great masters of drama. And what is more, Bhāsa has condensed in this brief dialogue the long debates and exchanges which occupy full ten sargas in Vālmīki! Here again, we see Bhāsa's art of condensation at its best. The gift to select is one of the accomplishments of a successful artist!

As for the other merits of *Abhiṣeka,* Bhāsa's mastery of the *patākāsthānaka* of Indian dramaturgy and the dramatic irony of the Sophoclean type and his effective handling of satire, which are to blossom into fulness in the later plays, are in occasional evidence in this early play too.

The sudden entry of a rākṣasa with the words "By Rāma. By Rāma" when Rāvaṇa was heckling Sītā with the question "Who will save you now?" is a beautiful instance of *patākāsthānaka,* which is an effective tool in the hands of dramatists to foreshadow the future events of the plot.

Sophoclean irony arises in a drama, when, in the words of Bradley, "a speaker is made to use words bearing to the audience, in addition to his own meaning, a further and more ominous sense hidden from himself and usually from the other persons on the stage." We have a good example of this in Vālin's threat to Sugrīva that there was no hope of his returning alive even if Indra or Lord Viṣṇu himself protected him. Poor Vālin! He was then blissfully ignorant of the protecting hand of Lord Viṣṇu actually behind Sugrīva then, in the guise of Rāma; and poor Sugrīva too was equally ignorant of it! The previous utterance of Vālin to Tārā, wherein too he had declared that Viṣṇu would be powerless before him, has also the same effect of prophetic irony to the audience, who were aware of the impending fall of Vālin at the very hands of the same Viṣṇu come as Rāma!

The same scene of the confrontation between Vālin and Sugrīva contains a fine piece of satire too, when Sugrīva challenges Vālin for the fight, with the words:

aparādham anuddiśya parityaktas-tvayā vibho /
yuddhe tvat-pāda-śuśrūṣāṁ sugrīvaḥ kartum icchati //

> My most venerable master! your former slave Sugrīva, whom you had punished with unmerited exile for his uncommitted offence, is now back before you, wishing to massage your feet in an open duel!

Bhāsa has provided in this little *anuṣṭubh* verse, a pithy example of how deep words can sting!

In fine, the *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka* has all the marks of an early play of a great dramatist, with its inevitable immaturities, but not without its bright spots. It can safely be described as a drama of average merit, quite delightful in patches.

Pratimā-nāṭaka

The benedictory prayer is addressed to Rāma in this play also, as in *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka.* But there is a clear difference of tone. The names of some major characters are introduced by pun through the device of *mudrālaṅkāra.* The pun is somewhat strained in some cases, particularly in the forced effort to somehow bring in the word *pratimā* too in the verse, as an oblique pointer of the *pratimā-gṛha* scene, which has given the play its title. The prologue too is a clear advance from the point of the dramatists' craft. It just informs the audience of the great rejoicing in a palace but leaves the audience in temporary suspense about whose palace it was or what the occasion for the rejoicing was. Another specially noteworthy feature about this prologue is the description of the season that is included in it. The description of autumn is a probable pointer of the season of its first enactment. *Pratimā* is the only play which contains this feature, which came to be introduced as a regular rule of the prologue in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and became a rigid convention in later Sanskrit plays.

The Act proper opens with the bustle and excitement in the palace of Daśaratha. Daśaratha had suddenly ordered Rāma's coronation. That fine morning, he had summoned Rāma—as Rāma later described the highly dramatic episode with its climax and anti-climax to Sītā—and simply told him that he should receive kingship. The sudden disclosure comes as a bolt from the blue to Rāma. He is nonplussed. He wants to be spared and wishes the father to continue. But his heart is full. His voice fails him. Tongue-tied, he falls at the father's feet. His gushing tears moistening Daśaratha's feet, expressed with greater force and depth, what no words could have done. The father is overwhelmed. Tears stream forth from all the four eyes simultaneously, with the son burying his face in the father's feet. Bhāsa's muse has captured the beauty of this tense psychological situation in a picture, unsurpassed for its power expressed through simplicity. Rāma tells Sītā:

tatra hi pādayorasmi patitaḥ—
samaṁ bāṣpeṇa patatā tasyopari mamāpyadhaḥ /
piturme kleditau pādau mamāpi kleditaṁ śiraḥ //

There on his feet, I fell prostrate;
And at that moment simultaneous,
Tears rolled forth from eyes of both;
His, above; and mine, below.
My father's feet were drenched;
Even so, my head.

Daśaratha refuses to yield to Rāma's protestations. But when he swears by his life, Rāma is silenced. The coronation is immediately arranged. Rāma is seated on the royal throne. Śatrughna and Lakṣmaṇa stand ready beside with the pot of sanctified water. Daśaratha himself holds the royal umbrella. But in a split second, Mantharā steps in, in apparent agitation. She promptly whispers something in the king's ears and the coronation is stopped with the same unceremonious suddenness with which it was arranged. Daśaratha now simply tells Rāma that he could go and rest. No explanation is offered. It is a mystery to all—both the sudden coronation and its equally sudden suspension. Only a dim hint of political intrigues is given in Sītā's cryptic remark that many things happen in royal palaces! The dramatist keeps the mystery till the very close and part of it remains mysterious even after the curtain falls.

To Rāma, however, all this matters little. Sītā too shares his equipoise. They are exemplars of conjugal harmony—both physical and spiritual. There is a touch of real romantic tenderness about their love, when Rāma offers to hold the mirror for Sītā to help her wear her ornaments. The tempestuous anger of Lakṣmaṇa at the stoppage of the coronation, his pacification by Rāma, Sītā's and Lakṣmaṇa's bid to accompany Rāma to the forest and Rāma's vain bid to dissuade them are all patterned after Vālmīki. The Act closes with the departure of the three to the forest. Thus the Act compresses the whole of Vālmīki's Ayodhyākāṇḍa.

But there is one episode in this Act, which is Bhāsa's original invention. It has been beautifully cemented with the set up of the original story as not to leave any mark of a foreign transplant on the natural anatomy. Superficially, it appears that the episode has been brought in just as an attractive and striking change in the story. But the truth is otherwise. It has deeper dramatic implications. Along with the *pratimāgṛha* episode—the major creation of Bhāsa's inventive skill in this play—this too is part of the dramatist's integral scheme, restructuring the old story to achieve his specific dramaturgical purpose of removing the stubborn stains in the portrait of Kaikeyī, as left by Vālmīki's brush.

This is usually described as the Valkala-incident or the incident of bark-garments. Avadātikā, one of Sītā's maids, steals a suit of bark-garments from the green room of the palace theatre. It is just a practical joke at the expense of Revā, the woman in charge of the costumes. She does it all as pure fun, in the spirit of mischief without malice. She had hidden it in her left hand, but could not keep her countenance. Sītā's sharp eyes discover the truth from her mischievous looks that there was something up her sleeves, which made her suppress her laugh. Avadātikā then explains that they had asked for just a single *aśoka* sprig out of the leavings of stage decoration, but the wench refused. In retaliation, they pilfered the garment away. Sītā first chides the girl, but gets a sudden feminine curiosity to see how she would look in bark-dress. She puts it on. The attendants admire her beauty and exclaim that she looks marvellously well in it. Sītā asks for a mirror. It is brought immediately. But it all stops there with the exciting news of Rāma's coronation, followed by his arrival after its dramatic suspension. There was no time left for Sītā to remove the bark-dress. She just covers it up with her customary upper wear. Rāma recounts to Sītā all that had happened.

When he finishes, he suddenly notices that Sītā had removed her ornaments and asks for the reason. Sītā gives evasive replies, not wanting to divulge the truth that she had given them away in her jubilation at the news of his coronation. Rāma holds the mirror for Sītā and asks her to put her ornaments on. Suddenly Rāma notices the hidden bark-dress on her person from the reflected image inside the mirror and asks Sītā: "It looks like bark-dress in the mirror? What is it all about? Or is it merely the reflected glare of the sun's rays producing an illusion? Oh, your smile speaks. Well, is it just a freakish fancy or some serious resolve for austerity?"

It is impossible to miss the beautiful irony hidden in this last question of Rāma, by which the dramatist throws the oblique hint of Sītā's coming forest-life of austerity in a most casual manner, which has a charm all its own. The prophetic irony becomes more touching, when Rāma too develops an unprompted liking for bark-dress and asks for it!

Special credit is also due to Bhāsa for making the whole episode highly natural by preparing the ground for it well in advance by the deft suggestion contained in the various arrangements for the coronation. The manager of the palace-theatre was then asked to keep the stage ready immediately with a drama for the occasion. The pilfering of *valkala* by Avadātikā from the green room is thus linked with the main plot, and does not hang as a loose unconnected appendage.

Faced by Rāma's question about her motive for wearing bark-dress, Sītā feels shy to disclose the freakish fancy which prompted her to try it on her person. Rāma turns to Avadātikā for an answer. What follows is best told in Bhāsa's own manner:

AVADĀTIKĀ: Sir, mistress had put it on in sheer fun, out of curiosity to see, whether she would look charming in it or not.

RĀMA: What is this, Sītā? You have *now* put on the dress, which is the habit of the *old* kings of our family. Well, it looks quite exciting. Why not I try it on my person too? Get a suit of bark for me too.

SĪTĀ: No! Please no! For goodness sake, stop such inauspicious talk.

RĀMA: Sītā, why prevent me alone?

SĪTĀ: It looks very ominous to me, after you have just been deprived of the throne.

RĀMA: Don't be alarmed by self-conceived fears, especially when it is all in fun. Moreover, when *you* have worn it, half my body has already worn it.

At this stage, the thread of the *valkala*-episode is again cut by the news of further developments: Kaikeyī's demand of kingship for Bharata and Rāma's exile to the forest, followed by Lakṣmaṇa's indignant outbursts. Rāma pacifies and convinces Lakṣmaṇa and peremptorily asks for the bark-garment from Sītā. His mind is made up to proceed to the forest. Sītā is bent upon following him and bandies words with him. In Bhāsa, this exchange of words is brief but brisk and brings out in full relief his gift of writing effective stage-dialogues. Sītā prevails. Rāma gives in. There is no reply to a woman's argument!

At this stage, Bhāsa again utilises the *valkala* incident with rare artistry. A maid-servant from the theatre suddenly arrives with more bark-garments sent by the same Revā, the manageress of costumes. She has, in the meanwhile, discovered Avadātikā's prank and thinks that Sītā herself is probably interested in the dress. She now sends fresh unused suits to Sītā. This comes in quite handy for Rāma. He takes them from the maid, puts them on and makes ready for the forest. Lakṣmaṇa claims his share of the bark-dress from Rāma and gets it after a brief argument. There is a touch of tender pathos with an undertone of grim humour in the way in which Bhāsa's Lakṣmaṇa asserts his right for his share of bark-garments from Rāma, meaning thereby, that he should also be permitted to accompany him to the forest. Says Lakṣmaṇa: "You always used to give me an equal share of everything you got: garlands, ornaments and what not; but have now monopolised the bark-dress and put it on, all alone. How strange, that you should grudge giving me bark-dress of all things!"

Thus, Bhāsa has contrived through this deftly conceived episode to provide bark garments to all three of them for their forest journey in a manner, which is as novel, striking and purposive as it is natural, spontaneous and artistic.

Bhāsa's main dramaturgic motive in inventing this incident is to dissociate his Kaikeyī from her abominable act of presenting the exiles with three suits of bark-dress, which is attributed to her in Vālmīki's epic. That she gave the bark-dress to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa was atrocious enough; but to give it to Sītā was "the most unkindest cut of all" to use the familiar Shakespearean phrase. Vālmīki has heightened Kaikeyī's cruelty by the heart-rending picture of the innocent Sītā, standing perplexed in the assembly, not knowing how to put on the bark-dress and Rāma has to fix it on her person, with his own hands. All the women protest in one voice against the iniquity. This is followed in Vālmīki by the haunting picture of Vasiṣṭha's wrath, which is the master-

-stroke employed by Vālmīki here to climax his powerful delineation of Kaikeyī's inhuman conduct. By his sublime poetry of the wrath of Vasiṣṭha at this black deed of Kaikeyī, Vālmīki has suggested that the last drop of feminine tenderness had dried up in Kaikeyī's heart of stone. The sage had silently witnessed all that was going on and swallowed everything quietly so far. But the sight of the immaculate Sītā clad in bark, and that fastened by Rāma—that was beyond his tether! He flies into a fit of rage and gives Kaikeyī a piece of his mind. To provoke the unprovokably stern heart of the philosopher-sage, soaring far above the passions of this little earth-earthy world, was the acme of it all. By saying this, Vālmīki's muse has said the last word in Kaikeyī's atrocities! And this posed a mighty challenge to Bhāsa's muse, bent upon washing off the most stubborn stains in the portrait of Kaikeyī and pledged to give her a clean chit! Bhāsa's muse was here pitted against the great Vālmīki's—his own *mārgadarśī maharṣi*, to use a phrase of Bhoja. And it is no small consolation to admirers of Bhāsa that he has proved himself a none-too-unworthy *chela* of the great *guru*.

To elevate his Kaikeyī, Bhāsa had to drop all this altogether and find out other means of providing Sītā, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with bark-apparel. It was impossible to think of any person, who would consciously give bark-garments to Sītā, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Bhāsa found the way out first by making Sītā wear it herself in the privacy of her chamber and secondly, by making an unconscious and unmeaning maid deliver the bark clothes to Rāma, blissfully ignorant of the pathetic implications of her act.

There is another interesting aspect of this innovation made by Bhāsa. He has in a sense improved upon Vālmīki by providing a plausible answer to the question posed by some against Vālmīki about the propriety of the ready availability of bark-garments in a palace ward-robe! It has been suggested that this shows the wicked foresight of Vālmīki's Kaikeyī. With regard to the three suits of bark-dress, which she had kept ready with her, an amusing comment is some times made that it serves to magnify her wicked sharpness, which made her anticipate that Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa too were bound to accompany Rāma to the forest. She had, therefore, quietly provided bark-suits for them too! As against this, Bhāsa made the bark-garments come from the green-room of a theatre, where the existence of all forms of costumes, including bark-garments, would stand fully justified. The execution of the dramaturgic design is thus a fine tribute to Bhāsa's keen sense of propriety or *aucitya*, which has rightly been hailed by Indian critics of the literary art as the main plank on which *rasa* rests.

This apart, Bhāsa has demonstrated his mastery of the technique of foreshadowing and suspense too in the general build-up of this episode. The removal of ornaments from Sītā's person closely following her putting on a bark-dress and Rāma's subsequent question to her, whether she meant to take to a life of penance do dimly foreshadow her self-imposed exile to come. Likewise, in Rāma's spontaneous desire to wear the dress of tree-bark, the responsive audience is bound to sense a foreshadowing of Rāma's impending exile to the forest. Rāma's further remark that Sītā had put on the dress customarily assumed by Ikṣvāku kings and queens in their old age and Sītā's similar comment that Rāma's wearing bark-garment soon after renouncing the coronation portended evil—also lend further strength to the dimly foreshadowed exile of both.

The first Act concludes with the departure of the three to the forest, ignoring the appeal of the chamberlain to stop, made in the name of Daśaratha, who was following them, smeared all over with the dust of the ground; like a frail old forest elephant.

The second Act, also laid in Daśaratha's palace has a short prelude. It is intended to give the twofold information to the audience: that the king was in a critical condition, calling for vigilance on the part of all attendants and, secondly, that the whole Ayodhyā was immersed in gloom. The Act proper is a touching picture of Daśaratha, in his last moments; full of remorse, crying hoarse and cursing himself. His hours are numbered. He pines for his exiled children. He is in a state of mental aberration. Kausalyā and Sumitrā stand attendance on him. He says whatever comes to his mind. He calls out to his lost sons and daughter-in-law to take pity on him. In a sudden fit, he looks up and chides Fate thus: "Oh God! Why did you not make these three things? Me childless; Rāma, the son of some other king and Kaikeyī, a ferocious tigress in the forest!" As regards plot-movement or real action, the Act contributes little or nothing. Sumantra has left Rāma and others in the forest and reports to Daśaratha. This is the only progress in the story. Here is an excerpt from the exchanges between the king and Bālāki, the chamberlain:

CHAMBERLAIN:	Victory to the king! Sir, the venerable Sumantra has just come back.
KING:	(Rising suddenly) With Rāma?
CHAMBERLAIN:	No, Sir. With the chariot.
KING:	What? What? With the mere chariot? (Faints)

KING:	(Recovering) Bālāki, did you not say that Sumantra has returned all alone?
CHAMBERLAIN:	Yes Sir, I did.
KING:	Fie! If, indeed, the chariot returned empty, Then, alas, my fond hopes have crashed. Verily, then, it is the fatal chariot Sent by knocking Death to carry Daśaratha!

Bhāsa provides an interesting peep-hole into Daśaratha's pitiable state of aberration in his conversation with Sumantra. No sooner Sumantra commences his report with the generic pronoun "all", than he interrupts him and asks him to mention them by their names. When Sumantra does so, he interrupts at each name with his emotional outbursts. Then, suddenly, he retrospects and disapproves the order Rāma-Lakṣmaṇa-Sītā and insists that Sītā's name should be kept between Rāma's and Lakṣmaṇa's to protect her from the dangers of the forest! Sumantra has to comply and he obliges his king by mentioning their names in the revised order. When Daśaratha hears that they only offered their respects to him but could utter no word of message, being overwhelmed with emotion, he suffers a near-fatal faint, from which he recovers only to rebuke Kaikeyī for her vile and sinful deed.

The picture of the final moment of his death is cast in Bhāsa's typical mould. He sees aerial visions of his dead ancestors, asks for water, sips it and looks up to see his three immediate ancestors Dilīpa, Raghu and Aja and tells them, he is coming to join them all. There is then the final fatal faint and the body is covered with a cloth.

Bhāsa commences the Act with suggestive pictures of the greatness of Daśaratha's personality by comparing him with the mighty mountain Meru, tottering; the ocean, drying up and the fading sun, falling down—all images of lost grandeur, drawn from the Hindu mythology of the deluge. In Daśaratha's death too, as in the death of Vālin in *Abhiṣeka--nāṭaka*, the basic concept of a great man's fall from power on account of a "fatal error", which alone can arouse the tragic feelings of pity and fear is complete. Prof. Pisharoti calls it "the only purely tragic picture, in the whole of Sanskrit dramatic literature" and Dr. De finds in it "one of the most striking scenes, which reveals the delicate handling of the pathos." (Act II).

The third Act of the play, which has given it its name is a real *tour-de-force* and can rank with some of the most powerfully drawn dramatic scenes of Sanskrit drama. The interlude itself gives a fine foretaste of the delicate hand of the dramatist. With its fun and frolic, it provides the comic-relief between two highly emotional scenes, which keep the audience high-strung. It is thus comparable, in point of technique, to the porter-scene of *Macbeth* and the grave-diggers-scene of *Hamlet*, though there is considerable difference in compass. The purpose of the interlude is to inform the audience of the statue-house, the installation of Daśaratha's statute in it after his passing away and the prospective visit of all the queens to the place, that very day. This is effected through a fine conversation between a white-washer of the state department (of Public Works!) and a palace policeman, both of whom are brilliant caricatures of lethargic indifference to public work and blind abuse of power, which ring true of their counterparts of our present twentieth century! Incidentally, this only goes to show that centuries may come and go, but man, made of the same primordial clay, goes on for ever! The white-washer quickly (perhaps perfunctorily too!) finishes the tidying up of the place and starts sleeping. The orderly from the palace, sent to inspect the work, sees him sleeping, shouts at his highest pitch, calls him foul names and straight away beats him up. After a brief exchange, during which, the white-washer gets more blows, the white-washer explains that he has already completed his allotted work. The orderly then frees him and asks him to go—the unwarranted slaps freely given earlier, having been written off in his official police diary!

The main scene introduces Bharata travelling in a chariot. He is on his way to Ayodhyā deeply concerned about his father. He has been told only that his father was seriously ill. With a heavy heart, he plies the charioteer with innocent questions. The charioteer is in an unenviable position. He is duty-bound to give true replies to Bharata, who, he knows, is soon to be his king. But, at the same time, he has to conceal the real truth of Daśaratha's death from him. Equivocation is the only go for him, for saying everything and still to say nothing. Bhāsa exploits the charming situation to full advantage and has created one of the best pieces of his dramatic irony, both of situation, as well as of words. Here is Bhāsa's verse, with my free rendering:

pitur-me ko vyādhiḥ? hṛdaya-paritāpaḥ khalu mahān
kim-āhus-taṁ vaidyāḥ? na khalu bhiṣajas-tatra-nipuṇāḥ /
kim-āhāraṁ bhuṅkte? śayanam-api? bhūmau niraśanaḥ
kim-āśā syād? daivaṁ; sphurati hṛdayaṁ, vāhaya ratham //

What's my father's ailment? A burning pain of heart.
What say the doctors? It's beyond their ken and art.

What food eats he? How sleeps he? On the ground; no food.
On what shall we pin our frail hopes? On Fate's sweet will.
Drive the chariot swift; my heart is throbbing still.

This is a fine example of Bhāsa's technique of boxing a full dialogue within the compass of a single verse and also of his admirable gift of dramatising intense emotion through just a word or two.

Reaching the outskirts of Ayodhyā, Bharata is full of excitement at the prospect of meeting his kith and kin after years. His mind's eye pictures numerous scenes: he falls at his father's feet and is lifted by loving hands; brothers crowd around him; mothers drench him with tears of joy; servants praise his majestic build and looks and Śatrughna makes fun of his dress and dialect; *et hoc genus omne!* The charioteer senses the poignant irony of Bharata's high hopes, which are soon to be shattered to pieces. He realises that Bharata is sitting on the mouth of a volcano on the brink of exploding. But all the same, he is helpless. Bhāsa puts a pithy verse in the mouth of the charioteer at this psychological point, which, in my opinion, contains the dramatist's indirect exposition of the rationale behind his invention of the *pratimāgṛha* episode. Says the charioteer;

pituḥ prāṇa-parityāgam mātur-aiśvarya-lubdhatām /
jyeṣṭha-bhrātuḥ pravāsaṁ ca trīn doṣān ko-'bhidhāsyati //

Which inhuman lips dare explode together,
Three catastrophes, to a soul guiltless?
The tragic end of a father matchless,
Greed for kingship of a heinous mother
And the cruel exile of a godly brother?

Divulging the news of Daśaratha's death to Bharata would, naturally, mean divulging its two concomitants; Kaikeyī's contemptible greed for regal pomp and the heart-rending story of Rāma's banishment from Ayodhyā. It would need a veritable human devil to explode all the three deadly bomb-shells before Bharata. Vālmīki had no problem here as he had painted his Kaikeyī as capable of all this cruelty. Contrary to this, Bhāsa's specific dramaturgic motive in this play was to introduce a change in the characterisation of Kaikeyī and make of Vālmīki's obstinate termagant, a new ethereal figure, free from the slightest touch of stain, which would be the very antipode of Vālmīki's portraiture. The *pratimāgṛha* episode, which takes up the whole of an Act in Bhāsa's play is just the outcome of this dramatic purposé. It is the pure invention of Bhāsa's imagination and the keystone of his grand design to re-create a new, uncorrupted Kaikeyī, who would be the embodiment of the highest virtues of purity, moral rectitude and self-abnegation and, above all, of self-less love for Rāma! Bhāsa has, accordingly, effected the revelation of the three tragic truths indirectly through the keeper of the statue--house, an utter stranger, who is then unconscious of Bharata's identity.

To take up the thread of the story. Bharata is accosted by a soldier from the palace. He delivers the message from Vasiṣṭha that the time is astrologically inauspicious. He should enter Ayodhyā after about half an hour. This is Bhāsa's dramatic justification for Bharata's halt at that point and making his visit to the statue-house, natural. Bharata looks round. The tall spires of a temple—as he then takes it to be—catch his eye. He goes there in the hope of gaining two ends, relaxation and worship of gods, at once.

The special decorations and arrangements outside invite his attention. He enters and is struck by the chiselled perfection of the four stone images, installed there and senses a strange human touch in the divine idols. The keeper of the statue-house, styled Devakulika, enters. He politely bars Bharata from offering worship. They are statues of kṣatriyas and it is not meet for a brāhmaṇa to worship them. Bharata's interest is roused still further, when he learns they are of Ikṣvāku dynasty. It is his own family. He thanks his stars for having stumbled upon that place fortuitously and requests the keeper to tell him more about the individual statues. The first three statues are introduced successively. The first is Dilīpa, the paragon of Dharma, who performed the great *viśvajit* sacrifice, in which one gives away his entire possessions as *dakṣiṇā*. Bharata bows low to the apostle of *dharma* and passes on to the next. The second is Raghu who had great veneration for brāhmaṇas, who in their thousands, greeted him with Vedic mantras, both when he went to sleep and when he woke up in the morning, day after day. Bharata pauses for a moment with wonder that death could cut through the impregnable fortress of the sacred Veda too and makes obeisance to him. The third is then introduced as Aja, who lost his beloved wife and abdicated kingship, out of distaste for things material ańd performed daily yajñas. At this stage, Bharata sees the fourth statue, easily recognises the likeness of Daśaratha in it and gets puzzled to see it there among the statues of his dead ancestors. He asks the keeper to repeat the names over again and he recounts their relation with the "king" (meaning, hereby Daśaratha) as great grandfather, grandfather and father and again gets stuck up in a blind alley, on coming to Daśaratha's statue. For a third time, he asks the keeper to repeat and the latter emphatically repeats: "This is Dilīpa, this is Raghu, this is Aja". Suddenly, it strikes Bharata, that perhaps statutes of living kings are also there and asks the keeper pointedly about it. When the keeper gives a clear and emphatic negative, Daśaratha's death becomes a foregone conclusion to him. He is in a quandary and tries to leave the place unceremoniously. But the keeper is equally puzzled by Bharata's behaviour. He stops him and asks him curtly: "What is the matter with you? Why do you fight shy of asking about this statue of Daśaratha, who lost his life too, along with his kingdom, which he had staked earlier, as bride's-fee?" That is a blow straight on Bharata's face, the very blow which he was apprehending and trying to parry. The whole truth regarding his father's death and his mother's role in it becomes crystal clear to him in a split-second. He reels down helpless. The keeper too is taken aback and scents the real identity of his visitor. He asks him, "Are you, perchance, Bharata, the son of Kaikeyī?" Bharata gives the quick retort, "I am Bharata, the son of Daśaratha, not of Kaikeyī!" The keeper realises, he has unwittingly blurted out the news of the father's death to the son. He realises also his indiscretion in having referred to the bride's fee in such blunt terms to Bharata, who is directly involved in it. He tries to slip away from the place, to escape from the awkward situation. Now it is Bharata's turn. He turns the tables on the keeper, tells him to stop and asks him to tell the rest of the story. The poor keeper is helpless. How dare he evade or deny now, when he knows that the visitor is the king-designate? He puts it all succinctly and says, "The venerable Daśaratha is dead; but goodness knows, why Rāma has left for the forest with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa." Thus the third of the three tragic truths is also revealed to Bharata, this time, consciously by one, who has no escape from it. The gradual stages by which Bharata is informed of his father's death—illness first, gravity of the illness next, then hazy doubts of the probable calamity getting transformed into serious apprehensions of a confused mind, followed by more definite inference of a clear mind and then, finally, by the actual declaration of death in so many words! Thus, Bhāsa has shown dramatic insight not only in the grandeur of the design of the scene but equally so in working out its details. Deep psychological insight is, in fact, the crown of this scene.

The news of Rāma's exile shocks Bharata's sensibilities. He drops down fainting. When he recovers, he asks the keeper to narrate all the details of the story to him. In reply, the keeper refers to what Kaikeyī was reported to have said to Daśaratha, when the latter had arranged Rāma's coronation. Bharata cuts him short. He completes the answer himself, with a severe taunt on Kaikeyī and collapses again. At this very moment, the three queens arrive as per plan and as already announced in the interlude. The magical touch of the mother's hand restores Bharata's consciousness.

The rest of the Act, after the arrival of the queens in the statue-house and Bharata's meeting with them, is patterned after Vālmīki. He refuses to bow to Kaikeyī and damns her, standing between his mother Kausalyā and Sumitrā, as a dirty rivulet forced in between Gaṅgā and Yamunā! He refuses to accept her as mother; coldly spurns all her explanations and drives her to a corner, on the question of Rāma's exile. Her only answer is, she will explain it, when the time is ripe.

Sumantra then announces the arrival of the subjects under the lead of Vasiṣṭha to crown him then and there. But he asks the people to offer the crown to his greedy mother and proclaims his resolve to go to the forest to meet Rāma (Act III)).

The interlude to the next Act is laid in Ayodhyā and introduces two palace-maids. Their conversation is intended by the dramatist to serve a twofold purpose: to inform the audience that Bharata has gone to the penance-grove of Rāma and to suggest the odium to which Kaikeyī is exposed in the palace and the secret contempt of her own attendants towards her.

The main Act is laid in the penance-grove of Rāma and is devoted to the thrilling theme of the meeting between the two brothers, culminating in Bharata's receiving Rāma's sandals, as a symbolic substitute for Rāma's physical presence. It closely follows *Rāmāyaṇa* both in plot and characterisation. Bharata and Sumantra reach Rāma's hermitage. Bharata requests Sumantra to go and announce the arrival of Bharata, son of the greedy Kaikeyī. Sumantra pleads his inability for using such expressions. Bharata thereupon wants to be announced as the curse of the Ikṣvāku dynasty. When Sumantra says he can make only a plain announcement, Bharata firmly vetoes his idea of taking the mere name. He is particular that the announcement should be couched in a language expressive of his penitent spirit. Bharata then announces himself as a cruel, ungrateful, uncultured desperado but, at the same time, loyal and devoted to Rāma. They all meet and every one marvels at the perfect similarity of Bharata's personality with Rāma's and of his stentorian voice with the late Daśaratha's. Lakṣmaṇa feels Bharata is like the reflection of Rāma in a mirror. Sītā too has a similar momentary illusion of Rāma in Bharata. All concerned are deeply moved by this touching meeting. Poignant memories of Daśaratha return. Bharata, however, fails in his efforts to change Rāma's mind. Rāma swears by his own name and forces Bharata to go back and rule the kingdom, as directed by their father. Bharata has no option but to agree. He consents on the express condition that Rāma would assume kingship after the term of fourteen years expires. Rāma relents. Bharata also asks for Rāma's sandals, which would deputise for him and wants to perform the consecrated *abhiṣeka* on the sandals. Rāma agrees to that also, inwardly rejoices at Bharata's nobility of heart and feels that Bharata has scored a clear march over him. Bharata returns a satisfied man, full of hope to please his subjects with the token of Rāma's love—the sandals! Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā see him off at the *āśrama* gate.

The next Act is also laid in the same hermitage in Janasthāna. Its main theme is the abduction of Sītā. A brief interlude shows the change that has come upon the lives of Sītā and Rāma. They both lead the typical lives of sages, devoted to penance. Sītā finds Rāma rather upset. He was wrapped up in the thought of how best to perform Daśaratha's *śrāddha* which fell the next day.

The stage is well set for the entry of Rāvaṇa and his talk about *śrāddha-kalpa*, which is the novel motif introduced by Bhāsa for Sītā's abduction. Rāvaṇa enters in disguise as a wandering sannyāsin. After receiving the customary hospitality, he introduces himself and refers to the various branches of learning that he has mastered. Rāma wishes to be enlightened about what would be the best offering in a *śrāddha*. Rāvaṇa enumerates many plants, birds and animals and deliberately pretends to hold back something. Pressed by Rāma, he mentions the *kāñcanapārśva* (literally, gold-bodied) the mystic deer of the Himālayas, which drink the Gaṅgā waters falling directly from Śiva's head. Rāvaṇa sings the glories of this unique offering, to kindle Rāma's desire; but pours cold water on his enthusiasm in a deliberate attempt to belittle him, by saying that they are invisible to humans. But Rāma is not deterred. It is immaterial to him, he tells Rāvaṇa, whether they are visible or not. His bow has the power to force Himavān to surrender the animal to him. Hardly has Rāma uttered these words, when there is a sudden flash and, lo! the *kāñcanapārśva* is there before Rāma, without his having to go all the way to the Himālayas.

In a forgetful mood, Rāma directs Lakṣmaṇa to catch the deer. Sītā reminds him that he had sent Lakṣmaṇa away on an important errand to the Kulapati. Bhāsa has given this new twist to the story here and removed Lakṣmaṇa from the scene, to avoid the awkward exchange between him and Sītā, which does poor credit to Sītā's character in Vālmīki. Rāma goes after the deer himself, instructing Sītā to wait upon the sage. Sītā feels uneasy after Rāma's exit. Rāvaṇa assumes his real form and talks vaingloriously about his greatness. The rest of it follows Vālmīki's version. Rāvaṇa forcibly takes away Sītā. The Act closes with a reference to Jaṭāyu pouncing upon Rāvaṇa to rescue Sītā and the latter's threat to cut him to pieces with his sword (Act V).

The interlude to the next Act introduces two old hermits, who witness and describe the fight between Rāvaṇa and Jaṭāyu, which, according to Bhāsa, takes place in mid-air. Jaṭāyu falls down dead with the fatal thrust of Rāvaṇa's sword. The hermits proceed to inform Rāma about Jaṭāyu's end.

The Act proper is laid in Ayodhyā. Bharata has sent Sumantra to the forest, for bringing news about Rāma. Sumantra has just returned with the dreadful news of Sītā's abduction. Lines of a mighty shock are writ large on his face. He is ushered into Bharata's presence. Words fail Sumantra. He is terribly stunned, so much so, that he is unable to speak it out. He is also apprehensive of its consequences on poor Bharata. He makes a vain bid to suppress the news. He simply reports that Rāma has left Janasthāna for Kiṣkindhā and mentions Rāma's friendship-pact with Sugrīva. While narrating it, he unwittingly blurts out the clues to the truth. Referring to Rāma's assistance to Sugrīva, he speaks of Sugrīva's banishment from his kingdom and loss of his wife and describes Rāma as sharing identical miseries (*tulyaduḥkhena*). Bharata is alarmed at the implication and asks him to elucidate what he meant. Sumantra first evades Bharata's prying questions, but is finally compelled to give out the tragic news of Sītā's abduction by Rāvaṇa through *māyā*. Bharata is horrified and he reels to the ground. Regaining consciousness, he walks up to Kaikeyī's apartments to rebuke her for her past wrongs, which had brought those dire consequences. The dialogue between Bharata and Kaikeyī is interesting for its overtones of satire. Here is an excerpt from it:

KAIKEYĪ: My child, Vijayā tells me, Sumantra has arrived with news from Rāma.
BHARATA: I have still more pleasant things to tell you.
KAIKEYĪ: Dear, should we, then, send for Kausalyā and Sumitrā too?
BHARATA: No, it is not for them.
KAIKEYĪ: (To herself) Humph! What, then could it be?
(Aloud) Tell me, dear.

Bharata:	Listen. Who renounced his right for kingship and went to to the forest at *your* command, *his* wife, Sītā, has been abducted. Does that satisfy you? Are all your dreams now fulfilled?
Kaikeyī:	Alack!
Bharata:	Fie! Out with you! It is all because of your coming into this family, Madam, that the noble Ikṣvākus suffer this terrible dishonour to a daughter-in-law today.

Kaikeyī feels that the right time has come to reveal the inside story of Rāma's banishment, which had been kept so long as a closely guarded secret among the chosen few in the palace. She narrates the old hunting episode to Bharata and adds that Daśaratha was thus cursed by the sage to die of *putraśoka*, namely the grief of a son's parting. It was felt that the curse had ominous implications for Rāmā's life. So, in order to avert the worst, she had taken upon her head the contempt of the whole world and contrived the artificial *putraśoka*. The revelation is dramatic; but Bharata is first sceptic. He cross-examines her in every possible manner and she clears all his doubts convincingly. "If *putraśoka* was all that was required, why was *I* not sent to the forest?" asks he. Kaikeyī explains that *he* was not chosen for this purpose, because the long years of separation from him had already neutralised Daśaratha's feelings for him and his exile was not likely to produce any great impact on his mind. Questioned about the long spell of fourteen years, Kaikeyī remorsefully explains that the intention was not to ask for fourteen years at all; but just fourteen days. But, as the cruel Fates would have it, her tongue had slipped in the agitation and excitement of the moment. Thus Bhāsa has made the fourteen year period of Rāma's exile, the tragic outcome of a *lapsus linguae* on the part of the well-intentioned Kaikeyī, pure as the sky. And, at last, when Kaikeyī affirms that this was all part of a plan conceived and approved by Vasiṣṭha and others, Bharata's doubts are totally silenced. How dare he question the wisdom of Vasiṣṭha!

This startling revelation comes as a most pleasant surprise to Bharata. Kaikeyī is not only exonerated but elevated to a position of glory. At one stroke, Bhāsa has lifted her up, as by a miracle, from infernal depths to heavenly heights! Bharata now falls at her feet and asks for forgiveness for the unmerited cruelty he had meted out to her. That is the greatest moment in the life of Bhāsa's Kaikeyī ! She stands fully redeemed before the eyes of the world and of her own son. She feels transported. It is a saga of the glorious victory of Motherhood through vicious odds. She hugs Bharata to her bosom with the ringing words.

"Cruel indeed should be the mother, who cannot forgive the wrongs of a son!" Bhāsa's Kaikeyī is a mother among mothers !

Arrangements are immediately made to mobilise the forces of all feudatory kings and lead a mighty army to join hands with Rāma's forces and inflict a crushing defeat on Rāvaṇa (Act VI).

The seventh and the concluding Act is laid again in the same forest of Janasthāna, the earlier resort of Rāma and the venue of Sītā's abduction. The interlude introduces two hermits, who tell the audience about the hectic arrangements afoot for the impending visit of the victorious Rāma with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa accompanied by the monkey chiefs and his rākṣasa allies. Their light banter has a few overtones of humour, centering round the culinary problems of the vegetarian hermits in making suitable arrangements for feeding the non-vegetarian rākṣasas! The interlude concludes with the arrival of Rāma and his welcome by the hermits. This interlude too, like the earlier one, is a fine instance of the age-old dramatic technique of providing comic relief, to a tensed up audience.

The main Act is, in this case, a continuation of the interlude. Rāma and Sītā share many wistful reminiscences of their life in those very precincts. A mere mention of the golden deer terrifies Sītā. Rāma has to assure her that it is all a thing of the past. All of a sudden, clouds of dust are seen and cacophonous sounds of beating drums and blowing conchs are heard; making the peaceful forest, a bustling humdrum city. Bharata arrives with the queen-mothers. After the customary exchanges of obeisance and blessings from either side, Bharata requests Rāma to take over the reins of government. In the changed context, Kaikeyī takes the lead in her hands for the present coronation. She adds her own personal request to Rāma to comply with Bharata's words and assume kingship. Just then, Śatrughna enters and informs Rāma that the people of Ayodhyā with Vasiṣṭha and Vāmadeva at their helm are standing in readiness with the materials for the coronation and requests Rāma to accept it. Kaikeyī affectionately pats Rāma and prevails upon him to be crowned. The coronation is performed behind the scenes. The people acclaim Rāma's greatness in one voice. Bards sing his praise. Rāma is crowned amidst ecstatic cries of victory. The occasion raises wistful memories of his father and the past abortive coronation. All the brothers and the chiefs of the vānara and rākṣasa hosts greet Rāma. Kaikeyī is all smiles and expresses her fervent wish to have the ceremony of the coronation celebrated again in Ayodhyā with great eclat. Just then, the *puṣpaka vimāna* is reported to have arrived. All proceed to board the plane. The curtain falls after the final benedictory prayer.

Dr. Keith was certainly off the mark when he clubbed *Pratimā* with *Abhiṣeka* and dubbed them both as mediocre. His observation that "the characters remain stereotyped and dull" may be partly or fully true of *Abhiṣeka*. But, if he intended to include *Pratimā* also in this castigation, either his study of *Pratimā* was perfunctory or its beauty was lost upon him. We have already shown the revolutionary change wrought by Bhāsa in the character of Kaikeyī by the subtle strokes of his art. What is specially noteworthy from the point of view of Bhāsa's art is that he picked up this very idea of the nobility of Kaikeyī from Vālmīki himself. But he got nothing more than the bare clue from Vālmīki. The superstructure is all his. This is precisely the *modus operandi* of all dramatic geniuses of the world. They take a spark and give a flame. Vālmīki's Kaikeyī feels highly elated when Mantharā informs her of the coronation of Rāma and actually pulls out her own pearl-necklace and presents it to Mantharā for bringing the happy tidings. It is only the repeated thrusts of the vile Mantharā that change and corrupt her pure soul. Here is Vālmīki's subtle clue about the reality of his Kaikeyī. She was intrinsically pure of heart; only she succumbed to the overtures of the temptress, to taste the "Forbidden fruit" and fell. Bhoja—a fine representative of the best traditions of Indian culture—has plumbed the depths of Vālmīki's portrayal of Kaikeyī's character and has expressed it with rare beauty through a telling simile in his *Campū-Rāmāyaṇa.* Kaikeyī's heart, says Bhoja, was like the pure water of a cool lake, spread over with fragrant lotuses and the hunch-back Mantharā, whose crooked body was a true reflection of her crooked mind, churned that crystal lake like a she-buffalo and muddied it beyond compare. Here, we have a profound projection of Vālmīki's Kaikeyī in the right perspective. Bhāsa not only preserved this innate purity of Kaikeyī in tact, but went a step ahead of Vālmīki and made her impervious to external corrupting influences as well.

By inventing the statue-house, Bhāsa absolved Kaikeyī of the blackest of her deeds in the Rāmāyaṇa, namely, gloating to Bharata over her ignominious success in securing the kingdom for him even after paying dearly for it with Daśaratha's life. To have attempted this was base enough, but to have gloated over it to her own son, even when the dire consequences of her black deed had become stark realities, and even after she had drawn upon herself and others the bane of widowhood, was the very height of perfidious baseness. Bhāsa skilfully dissociated his Kaikeyī from this disgraceful narration of her fell deeds to her son by inventing the statue-house and from the equally disgraceful act of giving bark-dress to Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa by the *valkala*-incident.

Kaikeyī is not the only character in the play transformed by the touch of Bhāsa's hand. Bharata is the other major character to whom Bhāsa's brush has given a new look with brighter colours. It was part of Bhāsa's dramaturgic design in this play to raise the stature of Bharata to still loftier heights than those to which Vālmīki had already lifted him. In fact, there are some reasons even to conclude that Bhāsa had probably conceived of Bharata as the *de facto* hero of *Pratimā*. The fourth Act of the play, where he has pitted Bharata against Rāma, shows him taller than Rāma, by head and shoulders. This is perhaps Bhāsa's covert motive in making his Rāma himself declare in so many words that Bharata has scored a march over him:

sucireṇāpi kālena yaśaḥ kiñcin-mayārjitam /
acireṇaiva kālena bharatenādya sañcitam //

Through long assiduous years, did I try
To earn my little fair name;
But Bharata has amassed immense fame
Right now in the twinkle of an eye.

Bhāsa's art holds up Bharata—not Rāma—in the plays as the *pratimā* of Daśaratha in Act III and again, repeatedly in Act IV as the *pratimā* of Rāma. On hearing Bharata's voice first in the statue-house scene as he revives from his faint, Sumantra has a momentary illusion of the dead Daśaratha speaking and, by force of long habit, immediately utters the customary greeting. He realises his error only subsequently and says that the voice was so like Daśaratha's that for a moment he had a delusion that the king in the statue had spoken! Likewise, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā too have similar illusions of Rāma's form and voice in Bharata's figure and tone. Prof. Dhruva expressed the view long ago that the real title given by Bhāsa to the play may have been *Pratimā-daśaratha* and not mere *Pratimā*. Though it is just a speculation, the odds appear to be in his favour. Such a title would have been truly in consonance with what I visualise as Bhāsa's avowed dramaturgic objective, of holding up Bharata as the hero of his play. If I should speculate following Prof. Dhruva, I would cast my vote for the title *Pratimā-bharata*, which would hold up not only the invention of the statute-house but also the dramatist's aim of projecting Bharata as the chief centre of attraction in the play and installing him on the new throne shaped by the dramatist for *his* hero. Rāma is no doubt the conventional hero but artistically speaking, Bharata's is the dominant figure. Dramatists pay scant regard to the traditional stature of their characters in their independent projection of the story. In this respect, *Pratimā* may be said to present a very interesting parallel to *Veṇīsaṁhāra*, where Bhaṭṭa-Nārāyaṇa's art relegated the traditional hero, Yudhiṣṭhira to the background and boosted up Bhīma as the real hero of *his* plot.

The question of the *pradhāna-rasa* (dominant sentiment) of *Pratimā* has also evoked considerable interest. That *karuṇa* the pathetic sentiment pervades the play is patent even to a superficial look. Ganapati Sastri expressed the view long before that the chief rasa of the play was *dharma-vīra,* mingled with *karuṇa.* Though this has not gone uncontested there appears to be much substance in Dr. Sastri's highly original suggestion. I feel that the dramatic insight and instinct of the true virtuoso in Dr. Sastri has led him on the right scent and enabled him to catch the spirit of the dramatist to project the heroic fight for dharma in his drama. While I am disposed to agree with Dr. Sastri's view of the importance of *dharma-vīra* in the play, I feel it should be related to Bharata's heroic struggle for the cause of dharma, rather than blindly following the traditional importance of Rāma. In this regard, Bhāsa's *Pratimā* provides an edifying parallel to Śri-Harṣa's *Nāgānanda*, where we have an example *par excellence*, for the intermingling of *dharma-vīra* with *karuṇa*, particularly in the second part. The higher position for Bharata in the artistic hierarchy of this play and the place of *dharma--vīra* sentiment are both inter-related issues which have not been studied by scholars in full. An in-depth study of these issues can unravel more hidden aspects of Bhāsa's dramatic technique and call up more instructive comparisons with great masters like Śri-Harṣa and Bhaṭṭa-Nārāyaṇa.

The *Pratimā*, although a more mature play, has its share of defects. The major defect in the construction of the plot is its over-reliance on 'Chance'. To make Rāma's long exile of fourteen years rest on a chance slip of the tongue—and that too caused by excitement—looks rather childish. The justification is patently weak. It would also be a gross violation of Poetic Justice to make Rāma pay so dearly for this fortuitous slip with full fourteen years of forest-life.

The novel design of the abduction scene has none of the delicacy of the statue-house or the *valkala*-episodes. The intrusion of the supernatural traits on the human figure of Rāma jars on the audience for the first time in this scene. Thus far, Rāma was human, every inch. It is not clear why Bhāsa, who figured out his Rāma as a mere man in the first four Acts, with no touch of the superman even, suddenly invested him with powers reminiscent of his divinity in this Act. Two statements put in the mouth of Rāma in this scene cannot be explained without assuming his divinity. First is his assertion that either Himavān will show the mystic deer to him or be pierced by his arrow to suffer the fate of the Krauñca mountain. This is not the language of a human archer and Rāma is certainly not the boastful type to indulge in mere bravado. The second is Rāma's suggestion to Sītā to start for Himālaya for procuring the mystic deer for his father's *śrāddha*. Certainly, Bhāsa was attributing superhuman powers to Rāma here; otherwise, it was beyond the ken of humans to reach Himālaya from Janasthāna to get the offering for the *śrāddha* on the following day.

There is one more flaw in the management of the scene, which mars the characterisation. Even if the appearance of the mystic deer is somehow justified as a feat of Rāvaṇa's *māyā*, Rāma's swallowing Rāvaṇa's lie that Himavān had sent the deer to him makes Rāma gullible and imposes too much strain on our credulity. From these, as well as from the overall poor quality of Act VII, critics have inferred that Bhāsa may have written the last Acts in haste. Whatever be the truth of the inference, the last three Acts present a rather weak comparison with the earlier Acts, where we see the consummate skill of an expert hand. All in all, it is a play which makes a fine dramatic start, holds out excellent promise; but winds up poorly with a tame *denouement* and a tamer conclusion. It is like the performance of an immature runner in a race, who makes an overambitious start, only to find his energies exhausted too soon and closes with a poor finish!

6

Mahābhārata and Kṛṣṇa-Legend Plays

yathā samudro-'timahān yathā ca himavān giriḥ /
khyātau ratnākarau tadvan-mahābhāratam-ucyate //

sarveṣāṁ kavi-mukhyānām-upajīvyo bhaviṣyati/
parjanya iva bhūtānām akṣayo bhārata-drumaḥ //

—Vyāsa, *Mahābhārata*

Like unto the ocean infinite,
Like unto the Himālaya towering—
Twin treasure-troves of the world reputed,
Is this *Mahābhārata*-epic great:
A repository huge, of precious gems.

Like the life-giving rain, to all lives on earth,
Shall be this *Mahābhārata*-tree imperishable,
The inspiring main-spring and vital life-blood
To future poets of consequence, one and all.

Of the six *Mahābhārata*-dramas, five are small one-Act plays, the sixth being *Pañcarātra* which is a longer play in three Acts, of the rare *Samavakāra* type. The plots of four of the five smaller plays are directly related to the battle of Kurukṣetra the exception being *Madhyamavyāyoga.* Three out of these four, namely *Karṇabhāra*, *Dūtaghaṭotkaca* and *Ūrubhaṅga* are actually laid on the battle-field, the exception here being *Dūtavākya* with its pre-war theme. The two plays *Madhyamavyāyoga* and *Pañcarātra*, which have plots not connected with the great battle, have also another factor in common, that both have invented themes, within the *Mahābhārata* set up. They are different from each other in the degree of their connection with the *Mahābhārata* story. But for some of the major characters, there is no scent of the original epic at all in *Madhyamavyāyoga*. Its whole structure is new. *Pañcarātra* is different in this regard. Here, Bhāsa has accepted the whole theme of the Virāṭa-parvan as his basis, though he has introduced a number of changes to suit his dramatic purpose.

Pañcarātra dramatises a pre-war incident which may be called the harbinger of the war, *Dūtavākya*, an episode of the eve of the war, *Dūtaghaṭotkaca* and *Karṇabhāra*, events of the intervening war days and, *Ūrubhaṅga*, a pathetic predicament of its last phase. Thus, Bhāsa's *Mahābhārata*-plays have plots drawn from practically the whole range of the great battle. Looking to this, some scholars hazarded a hypothesis that Bhāsa might have written two or three composite plays comprehending the whole story of the epic from beginning to end, on the same lines as his two *Rāmāyaṇa*-plays, dramatising the whole story of the sister epic. According to this view, the present one-Act plays might have been the different Acts of such a composite play or plays, isolated from the whole play for separate enactment and suitably remodelled later on, to give them the look of independent plays.

Though this view looks apparently plausible, it has not much substance in it. The artistic unity of the treatment of the themes, as well as the complete, and sometimes mutually different, pictures of the characters reflected in these plays, gives the lie direct to any such supposition that they are pieces cut off from an integral whole.

For instance, the Duryodhana of *Pañcarātra* is a noble and magnanimous character, who performs *yajñas* with faith, values truth above everything else and actually gives away half the kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas without even a murmur and is thus poles apart from the figures of Duryodhana, as it emerges from *Dūtavākya* and *Dūtaghaṭotkaca*. Likewise, the Dhṛtarāṣṭra of *Dūtaghaṭotkaca* is cast in a mould, totally different from that of the other plays.

The *Mahābhārata* theme is not the only common factor of these plays. The plays have a family resemblance in point of their prevailing sentiment and tone. The different facets of the heroic feeling *yuddha-vīra* (heroism in battle), *dharma-vīra* (heroism in duty) and *dāna-vīra* (heroism in sacrifice) along with *karuṇa*, constitute the prevailing sentiments of all these plays, though the emphasis shifts from *vīra* to *karuṇa* and vice versa in the different plays or their scenes. These main emotions are judiciously interspersed and happily blended with other allied sentiments, *bhayānaka* (fear), *adbhuta* (wonder) and *raudra* (anger), along with occasional touches of *hāsya* (grim humour) too, for which, Bhāsa had a special genius. With these prefatory remarks, we may proceed to have a closer look at the individual plays of this group.

Dūtavākya

The action starts with the hectic preparations for the war. Duryodhana convenes the assembly to select a commander. Bhīṣma is elected commander-in-chief. Kṛṣṇa's arrival as a messenger of the Pāṇḍavas is announced. Duryodhana makes calculated attempts to insult Kṛṣṇa, but it all proves abortive. Kṛṣṇa delivers Yudhiṣṭhira's message, pressing the claim of the Pāṇḍavas for their share of the kingdom. Duryodhana rudely rebuts the claim on the ground that they were all ill-begotten issues, not really born of Pāṇḍu. Kṛṣṇa gives a biting retort that the charge sounded very strange in Duryodhana's mouth, since his own father was, himself, an illicit child born of Vyāsa. Hot words are exchanged, followed by abuses from Duryodhana, who orders his men to bind the impertinent messenger. They all fail. Duryodhana himself then rushes to Kṛṣṇa noose in hand. Kṛṣṇa makes a big mockery of Duryodhana's attempts, through his powerful *māyā*, assuming alternately his micro-cosmic, macro-cosmic and multiple forms. Kṛṣṇa's anger is roused. His discus Sudarśana, the last word in destructive power, arrives in human form to do the Lord's bidding, followed by his other weapons and Garuḍa. Sudarśana, however, softens Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa finally departs after accepting Dhṛtarāṣṭra's apologies, on his son's behalf.

The crown of the play is the introduction of the painting-scroll, which is a part of Duryodhana's nasty plan to give affront to Kṛṣṇa. After ordering all his men to keep sitting when Kṛṣṇa enters, Duryodhana sits glued to his throne, admiring the different pictures on the scroll depicting the indignities offered to Draupadī by Duśśāsana dragging her hair and attempting to strip her. Bhāsa has exploited this painting scroll motif to its maximum advantage for characterisation, by making Duryodhana dwell gleefully on that vulgar episode of the past and come out in his true epic colours.

The dramatist's skill has beautifully injected a touch of secret sadistic delight in Duryodhana's aesthetic appreciation of the hapless figure of Draupadī in the picture-scroll:

eṣā khalu draupadī—

duḥśāsana-parāmṛṣṭā sambhramotphulla-locanā /
rāhu-vaktrāntara-gatā candra-lekheva śobhate //

Ah fine, here is Draupadī molested
By Duśśāsana, stern and severe.
And how pretty doth she look
With her perturbed trembling eyes;
Like the cut-crescent of the moon
Caught betwixt the jaws of Rāhu!

This picture-motif of the play has deservedly earned a meed of praise from Keith, who concedes, it is "effectively elaborated". Bhāsa's gift of powerful characterisation is evident also in the skill, which has set off the majesty and magnanimity of Kṛṣṇa against the low and mean tricks of Duryodhana, each serving as a fine foil for the other.

Dūtavākya bears the marks of an immature hand too. The poet's fondness for verbal jingles, reflected in the *yamaka* of the benedictory verse, gives the first foretaste of it. The free employment of the supernatural, particularly in the manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's miracles, was doomed to prove tame on the stage. Bhāsa's artificial experiment to humanise the divine missile Sudarśana—adopted in *Bālacarita* more freely—might have set a new trend for concretising the abstract on the stage and been the progenitor of a new genre of allegorical plays; but the wisdom of such artificial devices on the stage shall always remain questionable. This, as well as the long drawn out pictures of the divine missiles of Kṛṣṇa and of the fierce and sweeping descent of Garuḍa with the touch of the deluge about it, may serve as good poetry; but would fit in with a closet play rather than on the stage. It is also significant that *Dūtavākya* has the highest percentage of verses among the plays of Bhāsa.

Karṇabhāra

This is the shortest play of Bhāsa and, like *Dūtavākya* and *Pañcarātra*, has no female roles in its cast. Bhāsa has set up Karṇa's greatest act of heroism—his giving away his mystic *kavaca-kuṇḍala*—in the tense background of the battle-field in the midst of pitched battles between Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas. The first half of the play is devoted by the dramatist only to create the background effect. The total effect of these external tensions is sought to be heightened by introducing Karṇa, in a highly tensed up mood. Deserted by his *astras* on account of the curse of his guru, with his freedom curtailed by the promise to his mother and with ominous portents, he proceeds to meet Arjuna, in a highly tension-torn mood. Even at such a moment, tossed by troubles, he responds without the least hesitation to a brahman, who asks for a very great *bhikṣā* (gift). Though the brahman has made his desire tantalizingly ambiguous, Karṇa successively proposes all the great gifts that he could conceive of, one after the other—a thousand cows with horns mounted in gold, a thousand horses of the finest breed, a mighty herd of the very best of elephants and unlimited hoards of gold. When the brahman declines all this, Karṇa offers him his very head; if that could be the great *bhikṣā*, he wanted. Finding the brahman horrified, Karṇa comes out with his trump card, which he had reserved for the last and offers his *kavaca-kuṇḍala.* When the brahman agrees, Karṇa does smell in it a foul trick of Kṛṣṇa to deprive him of the last protection, he is left with. But without a second thought, he chops off the armour and the ear-rings, and gives them away gladly. When Indra sends an unfailing *śakti* to Karṇa as requital for the gift received, he declines it with polite firmness, but later agrees to take it, only when the brahman insists that it is a brahman's mandate.

The *Karṇabhāra* follows the Mahābhārata in respect of the story as well as the general tenor of the characters, except for very minor variations. According to the original, this event takes place long before the battle. Bhāsa has shifted both the time and the venue. Karṇa's heroic deed acquires a new dimension, when he gives away his sole and most powerful protection, at a time when he needs it most and, at a place, where he feels the pinch of its loss most!

The title of the play has been variously explained as Karṇa's task or responsibility and also as Karṇa's burden. Ganapati Sastri and others, who share the first view, are of the opinion that the play is probably incomplete, since Karṇa's responsibility as commander has not been taken up in the present Act. The second interpretation, which makes Karṇa look upon his *kavaca-kuṇḍala* as burdensome, once it is promised to another and feels relieved by getting rid of it, fits in well with the drama in its present form.

The unmistakable didactic tone as well as the absence of any dramatic deviations, reflecting inventive skill, are clear pointers of *Karṇabhāra*, as the product of a none-too-mature phase of Bhāsa's writing career.

The following verse from this play, placed in the mouth of Karṇa and often quoted for its didactic appeal, can serve as a good specimen of the ethical tone of the play and projects Bhāsa's early hand very well:

śikṣā kṣayaṁ gacchati kāla-paryayāt
subaddha-mūlā nipatanti pādapāḥ /
jalaṁ jala-sthāna-gataṁ ca śuṣyati
hutaṁ ca dattaṁ ca tathaiva tiṣṭhati //

Learning withers with the rolling years;
Trees with firm, deep roots do fall,
Waters of mighty reservoirs too go dry;
Only two things stand ever-green—

Gifts given to the worthy needy
And pious offerings in the sacred fire.

Dutaghaṭotkaca

The central theme of the embassy of Ghaṭotkaca is itself a pure invention of Bhāsa. There is no such mission of Ghaṭotkaca in the original epic. The play has two parts, clearly distinct from each other, both in point of plot and in point of sentiment. The earlier part, which occupies nearly two thirds of the whole, prepares the background, which is set in a frame of pathos. The news of the pathetic killing of the heroic but young Abhimanyu by the multi-pronged pincer attack of all the senior Kauravas, produces quite contrary reactions on Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Duryodhana. The former is horror-struck with the gross iniquity of the *śiśuvadha* and the ugly shapes assumed by the family feud. The induction of Duśśalā, the young daughter of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī into the stage here by Bhāsa, along with the senile couple, speaks volumes for his dramatic insight. Duśśalā serves him admirably well as a handy lever to heighten the pathetic effect. With characteristic feminine tenderness, Duśśalā condemns the cruel child-killer in forceful language with her caustic remark: "Accurst be the man, who inflicted widowhood on the tender Uttarā, still in her teens. He has, forsooth, inflicted widowhood on his own youthful wife!" Poor girl Duśśalā! She is not aware then that her own husband Jayadratha was the killer of Abhimanyu and the widowhood, she invoked, was really her own! The irony of the situation is highly touching. The pastmaster of dramatic irony that Bhāsa is, he will not let slip a single situation, which has the faintest potential for it. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is cock-sure of the wrath of Arjuna and the massacre of his sons, so much so, that the poor man stifles in his throat, his customary blessings for longevity, when Duryodhana and others offer routine obeisance to him!

The reactions of Duryodhana and his ilk present a sharp contrast and there are touching exchanges between the father and the son. He tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that if Arjuna had pledged self-immolation in the event of his not killing his son's killer before the next night-fall, it was a real boon for them. He would use his entire army to shield Jayadratha the next day and, hurrah! that was the end of Arjuna and, with him, of all the Pāṇḍavas! Bhāsa has beautifully set off here the bold but blind optimism of the dashing son against the prudent but pathetic pessimism of the demoralised father. The old man tells his son—

api praviṣṭaṁ dharaṇīm apyārūḍhaṁ nabhaḥ-sthalam /
sarvatrānugamiṣyanti śarāste kṛṣṇa-cakṣuṣaḥ //

Whether he plunges into the abysmal earth below,
Or climbs and roams in the limitless sky above;
Those arrows with mystic 'Kṛṣṇa-eyes'
Shall pursue, sure, the killer everywhere.

With this, the background is well-set and the dramatist ushers Ghaṭotkaca in.

The latter part describes Ghaṭotkaca's confrontation with Duryodhana and his delivering Kṛṣṇa's message of counsel to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and a final warning to Duryodhana. This part bristles with the heroic sentiment and projects a fine picture of Ghaṭotkaca's heroic stand, bearding the lion in his den; reminiscent of the picture of the bold and defiant Hanumān, on a similar mission, drawn by Vālmīki's brush. We have an excellent example here of the power of Bhāsa's pen for sarcasm and satire in Ghaṭotkaca's fitting retort to Duryodhana, when the latter has a dig at his rākṣasa-maternity and points out with pungent satire that his arrogance was a legacy from his rākṣasa-mother. Pricked by the uncomplimentary reference to his mother, Ghaṭotkaca pays back, saying that Duryodhana's cruelty had "out rākṣasa-ed" rākṣasas! Picking up leaves from the past Kaurava record of cruelty, which could freeze the blood in any human heart, he replies:

na tu jatugṛhe suptān bhrātṝn dahanti niśācarāḥ
śirasi na tathā bhrātuḥ patnīṁ spṛśanti niśācarāḥ /
na ca sutavadhaṁ saṅkhye kartuṁ smaranti niśācarāḥ
vikṛta-vapuṣo-'pyugrācārāḥ ghṛṇā na tu varjitā //

Never do rākṣasas burn their sleeping brothers,
  in a house of wax confined;
Never do rākṣasas touch the hair of a brother's wife,
  with hands so stained;
Never do rākṣasas conspire with foul intent,
  to kill an infant son in battle;
Oh no! for all their monstrous looks and fiery deeds,
  they aren't such heartless breed!

Duryodhana has obviously sown wind and reaped whirlwind! He belittles Ghaṭotkaca as a mere messenger and says that he is sparing his life only on that account. Ghaṭotkaca feels hurt and denies he is a messenger. He assumes a fighting posture with a clenched fist and hurls an open challenge. Only Dhṛtarāṣṭra's pacifying efforts avert bloodshed. Ghaṭotkaca then delivers Kṛṣṇa's warning to Duryodhana that their final doom is coming to them with the rays of the rising morning sun, the next day and departs.

The *bharatavākya* of this play is probably lost and the play ends somewhat abruptly. But there is little logic in Winternitz's castigation of the play as "a patch-work". If at all anything is lost at the end, it should be negligible. Ghaṭotakaca's mission is complete enough and there is practically nothing more to be done. There are some overtones of *bharatavākya* too in the verse which concludes the play now.

Madhyamavyāyoga

This playlet is different in its own way from all the other *Mahābhārata* plays of Bhāsa. In this, Bhāsa has tried a new experiment in play-writing. Here, he has retained only the three characters; Bhīma, his rākṣasī-wife Hiḍimbā and their son Ghaṭotkaca, but practically nothing of the original story, except the bare idea of Pāṇḍavas' life in the forest.

The story is wholly Bhāsa's invention though clearly modelled on the famous Śunaḥśepākhyāna of *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa*, in which the middle son of a brahman family with three sons becomes the poor scapegoat and is given away by both the parents to be sacrificed, the eldest and the youngest escaping the axe, being the pets of the father and the mother respectively. It is interesting to note that whereas in *Dūtaghaṭotkaca*, Bhāsa combined a *Mahābhārata*-theme with a plot-design inspired by *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*; in *Madhyamavyāyoga*, he has infused into the *Mahābhārata* environment, a plot-structure modelled upon a famous story of the Vedic tradition. Probably, Bhāsa's desire to write a play of the *vyāyoga* type landed him on this peculiar theme. Technically, *vyāyoga* must have a haughty hero, a vigorous theme with battles and the like and fiery sentiments. These features set the general tenor of this type and are reflected in the present play too.

There are two *madhyamas* in this play and it is possible that Bhāsa intended both of them as heroes. In fact, one of our later dramaturgical texts specifically sanctions many heroes for a *vyāyoga*. The unwanted middle son (*madhyama*) of the old brahman couple, who gladly volunteers to sacrifice his life to save the old parents and the two brothers, is the hero of the under-plot. Bhīma, the middle member (*madhyama*) of the Pāṇḍavas (taking only the sons of Kuntī into consideration) is the hero of the main theme, which is the meeting of Bhīma with his son Ghaṭotkaca and, incidentally, his wife Hiḍimbā.

The plot centres round Ghaṭotkaca's attack on an old brahman couple, journeying through a rākṣasa-infested jungle with their three youthful sons. Ghaṭotkaca blocks their way. Though conscious of the cruelty of his act, he has no compunctions, as he is only executing his mother's bidding to get her a human prey for her meal. Bhāsa's verse in the prologue admirably summarises this new theme. It introduces to the audience an old brahman, with his wife and sons, who is followed by a furious rākṣasa and is in hapless bewilderment like a bull with its mate and trembling calves, attacked by a tiger. Though each one of the party is willing to die for saving the rest in the true brahman spirit—the choice falls ultimately on the middle son, who becomes the proverbial Śunaḥśepa of the present story.

The introduction of Bhīma into this episode is managed with artistic ease. Ghaṭotkaca calls aloud his prey as Madhyama, not knowing his real name. Bhīma hears the call and announces himself before the group as Madhyama. The providential arrival of Bhīma proves to be a boon for the victim. Bhīma promises the brahman protection. When Ghaṭotkaca refuses to heed Bhīma's repeated requests to release the poor boy and Bhīma comes to know that he is his own son, he agrees to go in the place of the brahman boy but challenges Ghaṭotkaca to demonstrate his strength and carry him by force if he could. The fight between father and son, their pleasant exchanges and the melodramatic moves of the son to overpower Bhīma with a tree, rock and what not—now, the father knowing the son, though not *vice versa*—are exceedingly interesting for the fine fusion of the comic (*hāsya*) with the heroic (*vīra*) sentiment. The subsequent scene, where Ghaṭotkaca presents Bhīma to Hiḍimbā as the man brought for her meal (!) and the mother's banter are equally amusing. The play concludes with the final unravelling of the comedy of errors by Hiḍimbā's revelation of Bhīma's identity to Ghaṭotkaca, which comes upon the turbulent young hero as a pleasant explosion.

Bhāsa has utilised this scene of the father and the son, each ignorant of the other's identity and later with one-sided recognition, for a fine display of dramatic irony, his forte. Here is a thrilling little piece, highly interesting for the brilliant verbal irony it contains in the language of Ghaṭotkaca's refusal to release the boy—

mucyatām-iti-visrabdhaṁ bravīti yadi me pitā /
na mucyate tathāpyeṣa gṛhīto māturājñayā //

> This boy, at my mother's bidding captured,
> I shall not leave at any cost, my Sir;
> Even if my own father commands blindly:
> "Leave the boy, my son, leave him."

Poor boy, Ghaṭotkaca! He is blissfully ignorant of the amusing truth, that he is then accosting his own father and that it is his own very father, who has asked him blindly to release the boy!

Urubhaṅga

This play centering round the culminating phase of the war and describing the death of Duryodhana in the *gadā-yuddha* (fight with maces) is the most pathetic among the one-Act plays of Bhāsa. We have here a true Shakespearean tragedy as defined by Bradley: "a story of exceptional calamity leading to the death of a man in high estate." The secret of the tragic feeling generated by this play lies in the elevation of Duryodhana's character by Bhāsa. He is far different from his epic counter-part. Bhāsa has scrupulously eschewed every trace of his darker side, so conspicuously paraded in the epic. To this end, Bhāsa has not only remoulded the story, but created characters unknown to the epic. His little son Durjaya has perhaps just crossed the lisping age. Mālavī and Pauravī, two of his many queens are brought on the death-scene, along with his father and mother. All these are Bhāsa's creations. Three generations are thus made to converge at the touching scene of his last moments. With his masterly strokes, Bhāsa has shown, to quote Dr. G.K. Bhat, that "Duryodhana is great because he harbours a soul, which is capable of profound emotions, in the manifestation of which he touches an exceedingly noble level. Witness his reverence for his parents; he is pained because he is deprived of the privilege of saluting them. Witness his proud and aristocratic solicitude for his queen, whose sight on the battle-field with unveiled faces sends a pang in his bleeding heart. And witness also his fatherly heart that melts with gushing love at the sight and the talk of his little son. A respectful son, a proud and noble husband, an intensely loving father—that is what Duryodhana is." The greatness of his fall is beautifully summarised by the dramatist when he makes his Dhṛtarāṣtra say that the golden pillar, which once supported the world, is reduced to the plight of a broken doorbolt, lying flat on the ground.

His inability to rise and make obeisance to his father pains him more than the physical pain of his broken thighs. "Here is a second blow", he says. "What a pity! The wretched Bhīma has carried off the pleasure of worshipping father, along with my thighs."

His parting advice to his little son asking him to serve the Pāṇḍavas, respect his grand-mother Kuntī and give a son's regard to Draupadī as well as to Abhimanyu's mother, shows the complete metamorphosis of his character, artistically summarised again by the dramatist through the words of Balarāma, who remarks "Alas! here is fierce hostility converted into tender remorse." (*aho! vairaṁ paścāttāpaḥ saṁvṛttaḥ*). And, as if to ward off the possible impression that such nobility of heart is a transformation forced by approaching death, Bhāsa has consciously invested him with the same exalted qualities, even during the fight. The born hero that he is, Bhāsa's Duryodhana refuses to strike Bhīma, when he is fallen and helpless, just like Rāma in the Tamil Rāmāyaṇa of Kamban, who has elaborated this theme in full with superb charm. Like Rāma in Kamban's poem, who asks the helpless and exhausted Rāvaṇa to go home that evening and return fresh the next day, Bhāsa's Duryodhana too taunts Bhīma with the assurance that he will not strike him when he is in a desperate corner.

Quite apart from these facets of Duryodhana's greatness reflected in his words and deeds, Bhāsa has sought the aid of his powerful imagery to elevate Duryodhana and make his figure truly awe-inspiring. Duryodhana, standing with the lifted mace in hand, is like the Kailāsa mountain with Indra's thunderbolt, spitting fire! And as he crawls on the ground soon after the fall with his blood-stained body to reach his guru Balarāma, he is like the gigantic serpent Vāsuki, wriggling its mighty coils through the waters of the ocean, completely spent up and dropped down by the gods and demons, soon after the churning of the ocean for *amṛta* is complete. All these make Bhāsa's picture of the tragic hero in Duryodhana unforgettable.

The play has four distinct parts. First is the very long prelude, covering a third of the play's length, featuring three warriors, who witness the mace-fight between Bhīma and Duryodhana and give a graphic description of it, with its tense moments of jubilant victory and threatening fall for each in succession. The fight is thrilling because the fighters are equally matched. Duryodhana has greater skill, but Bhīma has an edge over him, with his superior strength.

The Act proper shows Duryodhana first with Balarāma, whose indignant outbursts at Bhīma's foul play and affirmation that Duryodhana had been cheated provide the greatest consolation to the fallen Duryodhana. This is followed by the next phase which presents the heart-rending scene of his meeting with his parents, wives and son and shows Bhāsa's mastery of dialogue. The last brings in Aśvatthāman, whose offer to wreak vengeance at the Pāṇḍavas is politely declined by Duryodhana.

The following verse describing the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra's throttled tears should serve as a fine specimen of the poetic flights to which Bhāsa's muse could soar:

vañcanā-nihataṁ śrutvā sutam-adyāhave mama /
mukham-antargatāsrākṣam-andham-andhataraṁ kṛtam //

As I got the fatal word of my son's death cruel,
Through the enemy's crafty tricks in the fraudulent duel,
My blind face, alas! is rendered blinder, all the more
As from these sealed eyes, flow inward, my tears sore.

If poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling", as Wordsworth would have it, we have truly great poetry in this little couplet. And apart from its poetry, bordering on the grand style, it is also an excellent tribute to Bhāsa's deep understanding of the psychology of the blind.

Pañcarātra

This is a play, unique in many respects. In tune with the general tenor of the *samavakāra* type, to which this play has to be assigned; it has a vivacious and vigorous theme and an exclusively male cast, both these features, admirably suited to its prevailing *vīra-rasa*. Retaining the bare set up of *Mahābhārata*, Bhāsa has created a totally different atmosphere, replete with highly dramatic situations. The *Mahābhārata* theme serving as the foundation for the plot-edifice is the last phase of the incognito life of the Pāṇḍavas in the capital of King Virāṭa, with Yudhiṣṭhira disguised as a highly respected brahman-guru of Virāṭa, Bhīma as the palace-cook and Arjuna, transformed as eunuch by the curse of Urvaśī for a year, serving as dance-cum-music mistress in the king's harem to the princess Uttarā. It is a fine tribute to Bhāsa's sense of economy—a true quality of all great art—in the dramatic cast that he quietly excludes the remaining two Pāṇḍavas from the plot of the play.

A departure of great consequence from the original is Bhāsa's strange objective in this play of presenting Duryodhana in highly noble colours. This is quite contrary to Bhāsa's own portrayal of Duryodhana in *Dūta-*

-*vākya* and *Dūta-ghaṭotkaca* which toe the line of the epic and present him in the traditional mould of an evil genius and even in *Ūrubhaṇga* which seeks to elevate him by the picture of his greatness in death. Bhāsa's uncanny eye for discovering the raw material, which could provide the basis for creating truly dramatic situations, is best revealed by his exploiting the presence of Abhimanyu in Duryodhana's capital during the incognito life of the Pāṇḍavas, by making Abhimanyu join the great Kaurava stalwarts in the cattle-raid against Virāṭa. This unique departure from the original story and the capture of Abhimanyu by the unarmed Bhīma, who simply lifts him bodily from his chariot and runs away, has provided an admirable ground for the creation of a highly effective and emotion-packed scene, unparalleled in Sanskrit literature for sustained dramatic irony of the Sophoclean type, with a truly delightful undercurrent of wit and humour.

The play opens with a rather longish *viṣkambhaka* (Prelude), containing a triangular conversation, describing the sacrifice performed by Duryodhana. This description, put in the mouth of three brahmans, who participated in the sacrifice, not only eulogises Duryodhana's nobility, generosity and deep religious spirit but seeks to glorify the institution of the *yajña* through impressive pen-pictures of the oblations, the fire, the smoke and the pious brahman-priests. The action proper holds up the personality of Duryodhana, the pious *yajamāna*, offering obeisance to and receiving blessings from the senior Kauravas, Bhīṣma and Kṛpa as well as his guru Droṇa and accepting the greetings of his equals like Karṇa and others. Droṇa utilises the opportunity and demands as *guru-dakṣiṇā* nothing for himself, but only that Duryodhana should give their share of half the kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas. This creates a real stir and provokes a serious controversy, in which Śakuni plays his conventional role of the arch-knave. Finally, Duryodhana agrees to the proposal; but on condition that Droṇa brings news of the incognito Pāṇḍavas within five days. This novel condition invented by Bhāsa, gives the play its title. Droṇa deems it impossible to fulfil; but finally concedes, when news is received from Virāṭa that the hundred Kīcaka-brothers were killed by an unknown person at night, inflicting no visible injury caused by weapons. No one else but Bhīma was capable of such a feat and this provides the clue to Bhīṣma for locating the Pāṇḍavas in hiding. It is decided to retaliate Virāṭa's unfriendly act of not attending the sacrifice, by organising a cattle-raid, in which the Kaurava-giants, Bhīṣma, Karṇa and Droṇa personally participate along with Duryodhana.

The second Act is devoted to the cattle-raid. Here again, Bhāsa exploits this to give a brief but scintillating picture of pastoral life through an interlude describing the merry dances and songs of the cowherds raising clouds of dust and providing an opaque canopy, concealing the sun from their view. The dramatist has thus provided, with consummate art, the fine ground to justify the sudden overrunning of the colony by the invading Kauravas and their escape with their cattle wealth. The names of the cowherds and cowherdesses, Gomitra, Ghṛtapiṇḍa, Mahiṣadatta, Gorakṣaṇikā, etc. are interesting as true reflections of their pastoral culture.

The Act proper follows the conventional style of reporting to describe at length the confrontation between the Kaurava warriors and prince Uttara, with Bṛhannalā, the disguised Arjuna, as his charioteer. Though Virāṭa is nervous about the survival of his inexperienced son in the odds against veterans, Yudhiṣṭhira reassures him, being secretly conscious of the powers of Arjuna. News is brought of the retrieval of the cows, the retreat of the Kauravas and the capture of Abhimanyu. Arjuna is eager to talk to Abhimanyu. He takes Bhīma aside and asks him to prompt and provoke the boy. Then follow the smart exchanges between the sprightly young boy and his captors, the former blissfully ignorant of their identity as father and uncle. The trend set here is continued in the next scene of the captive Abhimanyu facing Virāṭa with his sweet arrogance. By then, prince Uttara returns and informs the king, his father, that the greatest reward for the victory should go to his supposed charioteer, in whom, he has by then, discovered Arjuna. The brief but interesting protest from Arjuna is followed by Yudhiṣṭhira's announcement that the one year term of incognito life is over and there is no further need for camouflage. This comes as a startling but pleasant revelation to Abhimanyu. He sees his own uncle and father in his supposed captors, pleads forgiveness and prays for blessings. The darker side of this revelation of Bṛhannalā's identity as Arjuna, suddenly dawns upon Virāṭa. For a moment, his mind is obsessed with the horrid possibilities of the secret romances of the gallant Arjuna with his innocent little daughter Uttarā, during the year-long intimacy in the secure seclusion of the harem. As the only possible escape from this delicate impasse and its potential for mischievous scandal, he decides to give the princess away in marriage to Arjuna, as the ostensible reward for the victory in the cattle-raid. The concluding climax of this scene, which is matchless for its power of suggestive beauty and for its masterly elevation of Arjuna's personality, with the supreme subtlety of a practised hand, deserves to rank among the best pieces of Bhāsa's dialogues.

KING: Hey, Arjuna! Please now accept the hand of Uttarā, as my reward for your victory in the calttle-raid.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA: Tush! Here, my head hangs down!

ARJUNA: (To himself) Oh! I see. He suspects my character and integrity. (Aloud) Listen please, my king.

To all dear women of the harem, I always showed
The purest honour due to a mother adored;
I accept now this hand of Uttarā pretty
For my beaming, youthful son; not for me.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA: Bravo! Here now, my head goes high!

Arjuna's character stood fully redeemed. The thrill that his reply would have sent through the veins of Yudhiṣṭhira and through the veins of the sceptic Virāṭa too, for that matter, is too great for words!

In the next Act, laid again in Hastināpura, Bhāsa introduces the Kaurava chiefs chewing the bitter cud of the defeat suffered by them. The kidnapper of Abhimanyu is the chief centre of the discussion. Strong suspicions are expressed by Bhīṣma and Droṇa, that it must have been Bhīma. Śakuni objects, as he fears that in such a case, Duryodhana will have to part with half of his kingdom, as per his promise to Droṇa. Droṇa and Bhīṣma further seriously suspect that the person behind prince Uttara must have been Arjuna. At this stage, the arrow on Bhīṣma's flag, brought by his charioteer, bearing the name of Arjuna, sets all doubts aside. Śakuni still tries to explain it away saying that it could be from some other Arjuna! The arrival of prince Uttara on the scene with an invitation from Yudhiṣṭhira for the marriage of Abhimanyu with his sister nails Śakuni's flimsy objections and clinches the issue in favour of Droṇa. In response to Droṇa's appeal, Duryodhana proclaims that he would certainly stand by his word of honour and confirms that half the kingdom is Yudhiṣṭhira's as before and adds, "Man survives only when truth survives." What a contrast between the two Duryodhanas, of the drama and of the epic!

The conclusion of the play with Duryodhana's giving away half the kingdom is a major departure from the epic, which is sure to give a start to the audience. From this artificial conclusion, some scholars have inferred that the play must have been staged to celebrate the amicable settlement of a feud between two royal families. Another inference, similar to the one just mentioned, has also been drawn from the long and tedious description of the various subtleties of the sacrifice and its glorification, that the play might have been staged to commemorate some yajña. But all this is mere speculation and, in the absence of anything like evidence, has to be branded as nothing more than reasonable guesses, if not as wild conjectures!

Bālacarita

The speciality of *Bālacarita*, dealing with the wonders of Kṛṣṇa's childhood, lies in the huge number of characters on its cast. In this respect, it scores highest among the plays of Bhāsa. There are twenty-five male characters, besides one group of police guards and eight female characters, besides three large female groups of young cow-herdesses, *caṇḍāla* girls and the female attendants of Śāpa (Curse). With such big groups pushed on the stage, this is the only play, strictly speaking, which answers the characteristic of numerous roles—if that is the right interpretation of that much debated epithet *bahubhūmikaiḥ* mentioned in Bāṇa's description of Bhāsa's plays.

The five Acts successively describe the birth of Kṛṣṇa, the initial miracles like the appearance of a beam of light in the darkness to show the way to Vasudeva, the parting of the flooded waters of Yamunā, the appearance of Garuḍa and the five weapons before Vasudeva and Nandagopa, the automatic falling down of the chains and the revival of the dead baby-girl of Yaśodā (Act I); the entry of Śāpa (the curse of sage Madhūka) into Kaṁsa's palace and exit of Lakṣmī from there, Kaṁsa's smashing the female-child on the rock, and the emergence of goddess Kārtyāyanī with her terrible weapons (Act II); Nandagopa's narration of Kṛṣṇa killing the demoness Pūtanā in Yaśodā's disguise, the crack-down of the twin arjuna trees, the killing of the asuras Dhenuka and Keśin, the dance of the cow-herd boys and girls and the fight with the fierce bull Ariṣṭarṣabha, which proves fatal to the latter (Act III); the sensational taming of the deadly snake Kāliya of the Yamunā-pool (Act IV); the killing of the notorious wrestlers, Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika by Kṛṣṇa and his brother Saṅkarṣaṇa in the wrestling match, followed immediately by the slaying of Kaṁsa and re-installation of his father Ugrasena on the throne (Act V).

The language is highly simple, so much so, that Dr. Winternitz even suggested "that it might be recommended as a first reading to the beginners in Sanskrit." The plot teeming with miracles, violent feats, scintillating fights and folk-dances to the accompaniment of kettle-drums, is bound to be of special appeal to juvenile minds. The appearance of Garuḍa and all the weapons of Viṣṇu in an attractive parade on the stage, the introduction of an abstract thing like Curse on the stage in human form, accompanied by his five frightful female followers with shocking names—Ugliness, Baldness, Black Night, Long Sleep and Redeyed—behaving like a ghost or a poltergeist of folklore; and the presentation on the stage of goddess Kārtyāyanī accompanied by her frightful retinue Kuṇḍodara, Mahānīla, Manojava and her trident Śaṅkukarṇa also appear to be designed to cater to child-tastes. The spirit of wonder pervades the whole play from start to finish, providing the ground to believe that the dramatist has intended *Adbhuta-rasa* as the prevailing sentiment, with a free interplay of *vīra*, *bhayānaka* and *raudra*. All these features, serving to create the atmosphere of a weird fairy-land, tempt one to conclude that Bhāsa, probably, wrote the play for children. It looks not unreasonable to guess that the play was specially chartered for some kind of children's fete.

7

Legendary and Historical Plays —Other Works

satyaṁ bṛhatkathāmbhodher-bindum-ādāya saṁskṛtāḥ /
tenetara-kathāḥ kanthāḥ pratibhānti tadagrataḥ //

—Dhanapāla, *Tilakamañjarī*

Verily, these stories, which pass off as different from *Bṛhatkathā*, are but its refined elaborations, with a droplet from that mighty ocean, the *Bṛhatkathā*, as its nucleus. No wonder then, that they should all seem trivial, like worthless, worn out rags before it!

Legendary Plays

Avimāraka in five Acts and the fragmented *Cārudatta*, of which only four Acts are extant, are the two out and out legendary plays of Bhāsa. Both are pure love-romances, with totally fictitious plots, inspired by *Bṛhatkathā* or its earlier oral traditions, depending on whether you take its author Guṇāḍhya to be earlier or later than Bhāsa.

Avimāraka

Avimāraka is a play of high romance, describing the love of a princess called Kuraṅgī for Avimāraka, an ostensible commoner and an outcaste to boot. The plot exemplifies the *cliche* about true love, familiarised by Shakespeare's oft-quoted line: "The course of true love never did run smooth." There are obstructions galore, but love ultimately prevails. The hero stakes his life twice, first to save the heroine from an elephant run amuck and then to break through the steel-walled security of the royal palace, disguised as a burglar, rope and sword in hand, and scale the walls of the princess's heavily guarded apartments, to meet her at dead of night. Both the hero and the heroine attempt suicide in despair and both are rescued at the last moment—the former by a Vidyādhara, who gives him a magic ring, which makes him visible or invisible at will and works as a free passport for visiting the princess, and the latter, by the hero himself, arriving at the crucial moment. The plot gets complicated towards the end and the dramatist has recourse to *deus ex machina* and forces Nārada artificially in to unravel the knots. With true dramatic insight, Bhāsa has reserved the revelation of the identity of the hero as the Sauvira prince, to the last. This not only makes for the suspense-element, but also keeps in tact the tense romantic atmosphere of a princess's love for a caṇḍāla.

Of special interest to the sociologist is the vivid pen-picture of the mid-night scene in the city. The loving couple revelling in midnight-music, the woman providing the melody and the man playing the tunes on *vīṇā*; the hen-pecked husband petitioning to his stiff-necked wife, feigning to be cross; the clandestine lover lingering at the rendezvous, being cautioned by the hushing whisper of conniving girls; the city-scoundrels meeting in the open squares right under the nose of the night-police; the screeching owl and the escaping thief avoiding the street lamps—all these provide interesting sidelights of the social *milieu* of a state metropolis in Bhāsa's India.

Cārudatta

Like *Avimāraka*, this is also a drama of love, but with a striking difference. Here, love is not a mere carnal urge, it is a higher spiritualised phase of it. Though the heroine Vasantasenā is a courtesan by birth and the hero Cārudatta, long married, there is a touch of the Platonic in their love for each other. The play is unique in many respects. It is one of the very few social plays we have in Sanskrit, later perfected by Śūdraka, who imported the political revolution motif also into the theme. Its characters have a touch of the universal and are, in Dr. Ryder's words, "citizens of the world". As rightly observed by Dr. Pusalker, the character Śakāra, the villain of the piece "with all his eccentricities, mannerisms, etc., is a special creation" of Bhāsa. This is the one play of Bhāsa, which shows the depravity of brahmans in his contemporary society through the portrayal of Sajjalaka, the brahman-turned-burglar, who non-chalantly declares that what served him as sacred-thread by day served him right as a burglary-tool by night! Bhāsa's genius for humour is at its best here. The play even in its present fragmentary form, is full of humorous situations and can be said to be the crown of Bhāsa's satire and wit. The light banter between the Sūtradhāra and his attendant in the prologue—which is unusually long, against Bhāsa's manner—gives a foretaste of the fare in the actual play. The Vidūṣaka of *Cārudatta* is one of the most successful—if not, *the* most successful—clowns of

Bhāsa, of whom we can say with Shakespeare: "This fellow is wise enough to play the fool!" The passing on of Cārudatta's scented upper garment to Vasantasenā is cleverly managed. Equally interesting is the return journey of Vasantasenā's ornaments kept in Cārudatta's custody back to her, through the burglar and his sweetheart, Madanikā, Vasantasenā's maid. The sub-plot of this romantic love of the brahman-burglar for the courtesan's maid is thus linked with the main love theme. The fragment ends with the union of the lovers of the sub-plot.

Of all the plays of Bhāsa, *Cārudatta* has the dubious distinction of having kicked up the maximum scholarly dust, with the heated controversies centering round its present fragmentary nature, its inter-relation with *Mṛcchakaṭika*, which has bodily lifted and assimilated Bhāsa's play and the problems of the political revolution and the historicity of Pālaka and Āryaka, of whom, Bhāsa has referred to the former in his *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa.* The present fragment opening and ending abruptly ,without the benedictory and bharatavākya verses is, in all probability, the same as *Daridracārudatta*, known to and cited by our critics, without mention of the author's name.

Historical Plays

The two quasi-historical plays, *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* in four Acts and *Svapnavāsavadatta* in six Acts, are both products of Bhāsa's mellow genius. It has been suggested by some that both these plays combined together, may have been one composite play in ten acts. Bhāsa has, oddly enough, used the word *prakaraṇa* to describe *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* in its prologue and *prakaraṇa,* according to our later dramaturgical texts and the practice of later dramatists, should have ten acts. If this conjectural hypothesis is true, it will mean that they were split into two separate pieces later and provided with independent prologues and conclusions. But such a conjecture betrays ignorance of basic artistic values. The sharp contrast in the prevailing tone of the plays gives the lie direct to it. *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* is a fiery play teeming with political intrigues and counter-intrigues and is "an essentially manly drama" as excellently characterised by Meerwarth. Battles and skirmishes, captures and killings, kidnappings and hand-cuffs, assaults and injuries, stretchers and first-aids, disguises and espionage, hunting expeditions and drinking bouts, strategic moves and countermoves, challenges and counter-challenges—these constitute the main stuff, of which the plot-fabric of *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* is woven. There are only two female roles in the cast and they too have no functional importance. As against this, *Svapnavāsavadatta* is a play of tender love, in both its phases of union and separation. Here we see gay girls playing with balls, śephālika plants in rich florescence with jolly girls gazing at their beauty, betrothals, wedding-portraits, *vīṇā* melodies, a dreaming lover whispering his love in a weird sleep-talking scene—if I may coin a new phrase on the analogy of the famous 'sleep--walking' scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*—touching elopements with the beloved's tears washing the lover's breasts; heart-rending cries of a man tearing his soul at the tragic death of his wife, the apple of his eye; the mighty sacrifice of a self-effacing wife for her husband's weal *et hoc genus omne.*

Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa

Yaugandharāyaṇa, the Prime Minister of Udayana, is the hero of this political play. The central theme is his two vows, which have given the play its title. His intelligence-ring is so alert that the minister has known the minutest details of Udyana's capture by his neighbouring enemy, king Mahāsena of Ujjain, before news is actually brought to him by the king's body-guard. But before he could put his counter-moves through, the capture had become a *fait accompli.* The humiliations suffered by the wounded Udayana at the hands of the enemy soldiers pinch the minister, who swears to release his king. The next Act, devoted to the light exchanges between Mahāsena and his queen about the suitors of Vāsavadattā, sandwiched between the tense first Act and the tenser scene to follow, not only provides relief, but also dimly foreshadows the secret love of Udayana in captivity for the enemy's daughter Vāsavadattā. The third Act is one of the most ingenious creations of Bhāsa's art. The triangular conversation of Yaugandharāyaṇa, disguised as a mad man; the jester Vasantaka, disguised as a beggar and the other minister Rumaṇvān, disguised as a Buddhist monk, in a secret code language dimly announces the details of the conspiracy hatched by Yaugandharāyaṇa's mastermind; though it will not be possible even for an incisive audience to fully comprehend, much less appreciate, the nuances and meanings between the lines of its highly intricate dialogue, straight as it is shot from the stage. Subtleties, such as these—in which Bhāsa, with his keen stage-sense, never indulged usually—may serve all right in closet-plays but are sure to fail on the stage. The mist vanishes in part only when they mentally shed their assumed postures and talk as in their normal selves. Bhāsa has cleverly smoothened this transition by changing Yaugandharāyaṇa's dialect from his usual Sanskrit to Prakrit, in the disguise of the mad-cap. This was bound to be a *tour--de-force* on the stage, particularly with the additional force of the usual stage-tricks of changed tone, manner, etc. The latest news brought by the beggar-Vidūṣaka—who serves as the liaison between the king and the arch-conspirator, Yaugandharāyaṇa—of the king's clandestine love affair with the enemy's daughter and his disinclination to be released, throws all the minister's plans into disarray. For a moment, he is annoyed by this most ill-timed love affair of his captive king and that, with the person, most inconvenient for his plans for the king's escape. But his dauntles spirits will admit no going back. He takes his second pledge that he would release the king along with Vāsavadattā now. The master--plan works with mechanical precision. The king does escape with the princess. However, the chief architect of the ruse is captured, but later released with honour. The wedding of the escaped lovers is solemnised *in absentia* by the distraught parents of the princess with their portraits. And Bhāsa's dramatic genius, which could catch at anything, ably utilised this wedding-portrait motif for his *denouement* in *Svapnavāsavadatta.*

The mad-cap scene is also one of Bhāsa's finest creations and shows the humorist, at his best. The eulogy of drink in Prakrit from the dead-drunk (supposedly so!) Yaugandharāyaṇa is charming with its typical tipsy tone:

dhaṇṇā surāhi mattā dhaṇṇā surāhi aṇulittā /
dhaṇṇā surāhi ṇhādā dhaṇṇā surāhi saṁñavidā //

Blessed are those fully "boozed" with drink;
Blessed indeed, they, who are smeared all over with drink;
Blessed again are those, who bathe themselves in drink;
Ah! how blest they be, in the slumberous swoon of drink!

We have here a fine ascending order of blessedness in this alcoholic madness—suggesting "a method in't", to use a Shakespearean phrase—from simple drinking to smearing, from smearing to bathing and the climax coming with the cutting off of the ties with this small earth--earthy world with its miseries and the blessed soul "airlifted" into a heaven of its own making, in the arms of Morpheus!! Quite of a piece with this is the fine innuendo in the drunkard's condemnation, that follows, of the unfortunate wealthy fools, who do not build tanks of wine in their own courtyards, even when they have the wherewithal to do so, as a panacea for all their miseries from their wives and children! The "solo dialogues" of the mad man in this play are a real hit and contain, in the words of Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar, "the typical nonsensical rigmarole of a drunkard in the jocose, bellicose and lachrymose stages."

Svapnavāsavadatta

The unique greatness of *Svpnavāsavadatta* was recognised in India in long bygone days, so much so, that it had become the centre of miracle and legend even in the ninth century. A floating verse of his times, luckily preserved for us by Jalhaṇa of the 13th century in his anthology *Sūktimuktāvalī* and recorded by him as Rājaśekhara's, already quoted in the chapter on the Bhāsa-problem, speaks of a fire-ordeal conducted by literary connoisseurs and declares that fire consumed all the other works of Bhāsa; but *Svapnavāsavadatta* emerged untarnished from the flames. Here is my free rendering of this famous panegyrical verse:

> When, of yore, our aesthetes great, to the fire consigned
> The complete cycle of Bhāsa's prolific plays refined,
> What wonder, the chastening flames of fire couldn't dare
> Touch the lines of *Svapnavāsavadatta* fair.

If anything, this proves to the hilt that our ancient critics recognised the superior excellence of *Svapnavāsavadatta* and its claim for an honoured place among the perennial literature of the world. Under cover of legend, this laudatory verse records Rājaśekhara's sober judgement on Bhāsa's works, that *Svapnavāsavadatta* towered far above his other dramas and that there was the quality of timelessness in the dramatic appeal of this Universal Classic.

Bhāsa here picks up the thread of the Udayana story from where he left it in *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*. Yaugandharāyaṇa's ambition to recover the lost slices of Udayana's territory, annexed by usurpers and reinstal him as the suzerain monarch of the whole Vatsa kingdom is at the bottom of the whole plot. But this political resolve is given a different twist here by the dramatist to make it a drama of love, unlike in *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*, where the minister's pledge dominates the theme. Here love and marriage become his political tools. He plans the king's marriage with the Magadha princess Padmāvatī as the only sure means of boosting up Udayana's political and military power. But this was impossible without the elimination of Vāsavadattā, for, without it, Udayana was sure to spurn the very idea of another girl; and moreover, the king of Magadha would not consent to his daughter being numbered second anywhere. Yaugandharāyaṇa takes Vāsavadattā into his confidence and she agrees to be his accomplice in a strategic plan to hoodwink Udayana into believing that Vāsavadattā is dead. Vāsavadattā signs, as it were, her own death-deed. To give it greater credibility, Yaugandharāyaṇa is also to be declared dead. An artificial forest fire is produced in a holiday hunting bout and it is given out that the queen and the minister perish in the flames, the latter in his effort to save the queen. Yaugandharāyaṇa, in the disguise of a brāhmaṇa manages to entrust Vāsavadattā, his supposed sister, under the assumed name Avantikā, to the care of Padmāvatī. At this stage, a Brahmacārin, a supposed eye-witness, gives a poignant picture of the tragedy of the forest-fire, which serves to project Udayana's great qualities and his tender sensibilities as a lover. The ground is thus prepared to create a place for Udayana in Padmāvatī's heart. (Act I).

The next two Acts present a novelty in being wholly feminine scenes with no smell of the male in them! As a corollary, they are both wholly in Prakrit, with no smell of Sanskrit and not a single verse either! The second Act provides an excellent glimpse of Padmāvatī's merry life of light revelry in the company of her jovial friends, now absorbed in indoor games, now indulging in taunts and jokes centering round her matrimony, would be fiancé and so on, typical of adolescent youth. She is betrothed to Udayana. Preparations for the marriage the same day are being made at break-neck speed. (Act II).

Vāsavadattā is highly tensed up. She seeks refuge in solitude to give vent to her pent up feelings. A cruel fate assigns to her the task of making the wedding-garland for her rival with her own hands. In her exchanges with Padmāvatī and the maids, Bhāsa has opened up new vistas of dramatic irony with a deep undercurrent of pathos, quite unlike those in a light vein, providing amusement. (Act III). After a light interlude, with the epicurean Vidūṣaka—of all persons!—turning his back upon dainty food, follows a scene, designed with consummate skill, which holds the mirror up to the conflicting currents in Udayana's mind, tossed between his profound love for Vāsavadattā, still ruling its unfathomable depths and his somewhat forced fascination for Padmāvatī, surfacing its superficial layers. The dramatic effect is admirably heightened by making both the rivals in love—one conscious and the other unconscious of their true inter-relation—witness all that passes between the hero and his confidant in privacy, as excited eavesdroppers. (Act IV).

Then follows the dream-scene, the unique and unparalleled creation of Bhāsa's dramatic genius. There is certainly no dearth of highly dramatic scenes in the varied plays of Bhāsa. We have them in good galore; but the high drama of the dream-scene, the uniqueness of its conceit and the grandeur of its design are a class by itself. A head-ache of Padmāvatī—ironic as it might look—provides the ground for the momentary but poignant meeting between Udayana and Vāsavadattā in a mysterious dream-world. On receiving the news that Padmāvatī is having a bad head-ache and that her bed is set in the cool 'Water-house', both rush to the spot. The king with his jester reaches first. After an amusing exchange of pleasantries, the Vidūṣaka sees the king napping, finds the place too cold for himself and goes out to fetch a blanket. Just then, Vāsavadattā arrives with a maid, who leaves her there and rushes out to get the ointment for the princess. The king has covered himself completely, obviously on account of the chill in the room. Vāsavadattā mistakes the sleeping king to be Padmāvatī, takes her seat on the same bed and infers that she must be feeling better as she is sleeping peacefully. She finds a full half of the bed left blank and reads in that Padmāvatī's suggestion to her to lie beside her, to clasp and comfort her. She just proceeds to share the bed when the king, dreaming of Vāsavadattā, talks in the dream and mutters Vāsavadattā's name. That is the climactic point, which descends on Vāsavadattā—and the audience too—with a suddenness, which totally unnerves her. She shoots out of the bed, only to discover that, luckily, the king is only dreaming and no damage has been done to the plans of Yaugandharāyaṇa. That is a crucial psychological moment for her. To flee or not to flee is the question! How could she—poor she!—resist the temptation of the god-given moment to have a secret hearty look at the deity of her soul, who is her own, no doubt, and yet denied to her; who has been so near her all the while and yet so distant, cut off by a cruel political steel wall. Just then, the king continues his talk in sleep: "Oh dearest darling, why don't you respond?" Vāsavadattā is at her wit's end. To speak or not to speak is the question now! Instinct decides, where reason could not. She promptly responds in a plaintive subdued tone: "Yes, my lord, here I am, I do respond." Thereafter, this fantastic dialogue continues:

KING:	Are you angry with me?
VĀSAVADATTĀ:	No fears. Certainly not. I am just unhappy.
KING:	If you aren't angry, why have you put off your ornaments?
VĀSAVADATTĀ:	Ah! What is left for me now?

KING:	Why? Are you worried about Viracikā? (a former love of the king).
VĀSAVADATTĀ:	(Angrily) Fie! The accurst Viracikā, even here!

Here ends this mysterious rapport between the two sensitive souls—the hero talking in a dream and the heroine, almost dreaming in wakefulness. Such a dialogue cannot, naturally, go on for long. With deep psychological insight, Bhāsa has forced in the Viracikā-episode to cut this exchange short from Vāsavadattā's side. Otherwise, will Vāsavadattā, then totally lost to the outside world, stop and withdraw at all from that hypnotic situation? Certainly, not on her own. Some such expedient was, therefore, an inevitable psychological necessity. The king, at last, opens out his arms, appealing to Vāsavadattā to forgive him for his breach of faith and that is the end of this sensational little drama, within the bigger drama.

Vāsavadattā feels she had stayed too long, fears she might be discovered and wishes to quit. But her legs pull her back. She wavers for a while. Her hankering to touch her lover for just a second drives her crazy. She returns to replace the sleeping king's hanging hands in position and rushes past. But the touch awakens the king. He has a dreamy vision of the real Vāsavadattā for a split-second, hurrying out of the sombre chamber like an apparition, as a tantalizing continuation of the figure in the dream. But the thin line between the dream-vision and the real vision is so convincingly palpable that he senses the reality of Vāsavadattā, leaps from the bed, calls aloud to her to stop and rushes behind her. But in his drowsy excitement and the mad rush to get at her, he knocks against the door-panel. Vāsavadattā escapes by the skin of her teeth! Just then, the jester returns with the blanket. The king jubilantly cries out to him that Vāsavadattā is alive and that he had seen her in flesh and blood. But the Vidūṣaka laughs it away saying that Vāsavadattā was dead long, long ago. He must have either dreamt of her or must have been elf-struck. An elf called Avantisundarī was believed to haunt that place! Thus, the real Vāsavadattā, who is seen by Udayana for a fleeting moment and had really emerged from dreamland for Udayana, is pushed back into the realm of the fairyland for the nonce! But, in this unconscious mention of Avantisundarī by the Vidūṣaka, the audience is sure to sense a jolt of tragic irony, for they know only too well that the king had seen Vāsavadattā, who was, *in a very real sense*, Avantisundarī, the Beauty of Avanti!

An abrupt twist is given to the whole episode by the message, just received from the Magadha king that all is set for the campaign against

Āruṇi, the usurper. This brings in a sudden change of mood and the king proceeds to assume the lead. (Act V.)

The concluding Act opens with the recovery of the hero's lost *vīṇā*, Ghoṣavatī, and the revival of wistful memories of his giving *vīṇā*-lessons to Vāsavadattā. This Vāsavadattā-mood provides the emotional background for the recognition-scene (an interesting parallel of the Greek Anagnorisis). Bhāsa has no need in this play for supernaturally forced artificialities for unravelling the knot. The wedding portrait of Udayana and Vāsavadattā, brought by Vāsavadattā's nurse serves his purpose well. Padmāvatī recognises the close resemblance of Vāsavadattā with her friend Avantikā. The king is highly excited. Just then, Yaugandharāyaṇa returns in the guise of the brāhmaṇa of the first Act, to reclaim his sister Avantikā from Padmāvatī. Avantikā is presented behind a side-curtain. The truth about Avantikā explodes with a sudden thud before Vāsavadattā's nurse. She yells in frantic excitement: "Oh! Princess Vāsavadattā!" The king asks her to proceed to the harem with Padmāvatī. The disguised brāhmaṇa protests, she *is* his sister; but he knows, it is impossible to hide Vāsavadattā under a bushel any longer. When the king himself steps down to decide the identity, he sheds his disguise, changes his assumed tone and mien, strikes a new attitude on the stage and becomes Yaugandharāyaṇa again. Avantikā too follows suit, casts away her assumed cloak and becomes Vāsavadattā!

The wonderful dream-scene and the angelic sacrifice of Vāsavadattā are the two highlights of this play; the former, in point of technique and the latter, in point of characterisation. That this was part of the dramatist's design and that Bhāsa had conceived of these two as the vital centres of dramatic power, is reflected in the title *Svapnavāsavadatta* itself, which holds up the dream and Vāsavadattā. The first of these, the dream--scene, is a rare marvel of the dramatic art. The 'disguise-motif' with its concomitant, dramatic irony (both verbal and situational); the tantalising 'chance' element with the 'suspense'-thrills that flow from it; the psychological 'conflict'—all these dramatic devices are admirably pressed into service with consummate skill and are rolled in one, to make the dream-scene a *tour-de-force*. As for Vāsavadattā, the second nerve-centre of the drama, she fleets through the play like a godly angel, great in beauty, but greater still in soul. It was not Bhāsa's intention at all to project Udayana as the foremost figure in either of the Udayana plays. None of the so-called Udayana-plays is a play of Udayana! Yaugandharāyaṇa dominates the earlier play and, here, it is Vāsavadattā's day. If *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* is a thrilling drama of the self-less struggle of the dedicated minister Yaugandharayaṇa for the cause of duty, *Svapnavāsavadatta* is an immortal song of the soul-stirring self-effacement of the complying wife Vāsavadattā, at the altar of pure love. Vāsavadattā's figure easily towers over Udayana's in this play. Why, in the dream scene too, the chief centre of attraction is not Udayana, the dreamer; but Vāsavadattā, 'the dreamed of', who captures the sympathy of the audience with her lingering charm. *Svapnavāsavadatta* is, in a very real sense, a play of the heroine, not of the hero and is comparable in this respect to Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, where too, the heroine carries the day.

Vāsavadattā's beauty is not the beauty that is "skin-deep"; it is a quality of the soul. It has a touch of spiritual sublimity, of which, we might either say with Shakespeare that "age cannot wither it, nor custom stale"; or with Bhavabhūti *"jarasā yasminnahāryo rasaḥ"* (whose ecstatic relish is 'old age'-proof). We don't have the least scent of love as a passion in anything that Vāsavadattā says or does. It has the mellow glow of mature love and is happily free from the carnal dross. She prays from the inmost depths of her soul for the well-being of her own potential rival in love, so that *she* at least could keep her lover happy. What love can be more exalted than this? Bhāsa has invested his Vāsavadattā with such supernal beauty that, along with Śakuntalā and Sītā of the orient and Cleopatra and Desdemona of the occident, she has a place among the great heroines of world drama.

Among the other merits of the play must be mentioned: (1) its abiding human interest, with all the action proceeding from character and centred on the purely human plane, without any Nāradas or gods to explain or justify the incidents; (2) its perfect balance between the poetic element and dramatic action, never allowing the former to supersede the latter; (3) its inventive flashes displayed in the introduction of the Brahmacārin in Act I, the wedding portrait in Act VI, the whole lay out of Act IV etc.; (4) its full exploitation of Vāsavadattā's disguise for the highly tense situations, replete with dramatic irony, where Vāsavadattā's suppressed feelings burst forth; (5) its use of organic humour, more as a means of providing 'relief' than as humour for its own sake, cut off from the dramatic tissue and (6) its studied economy of art, as best exemplified by the cleverly managed dismissal of the jester from the concluding recognition scene, where he would have been a superfluity, like the proverbial *ajā-gala-stana* (hanging nipples of a she-goat's neck) of the Sanskrit idiom!

What distinguishes *Svapnavāsavadatta* from all the other dramas of

Bhāsa is its uniformity of excellence from start to finish. Bhāsa's genius does touch dizzy heights in select scenes of his other plays too which show the born dramatist in him. But *Svapnavāsavadatta* has quite a different tale to tell. We have here an all round perfection, rarely matched elsewhere in Sanskrit drama. No word is wasted, no technique misapplied, no incident purposeless, no character superfluous, no device abused, no imbalance in the portrayal of emotion, no jarring excess in poetic embellishment, no incursion of melo-drama, no intrusion of the supernatural, no flagging of the tempo, no violation of verisimilitude—it is well nigh impossible to point the critical finger at any lapse or shortcoming, serious enough to upset the total harmony of the play. Every little part has a role to play in producing the impression of integral perfection. It is like a piece of perfect art, where every stroke of the brush has a meaning and a purpose and adds its share to the overall grandeur of the painting. It is this phenomenal totality of perfection that must have made Rājaśekhara single out *Svapnavāsavadatta* of all the dramas and declare under the garb of the fire ordeal that it was totally immune to all attacks of the critics' fire.

The crown of drama is emotion and Bhāsa's gift for expressing powerful emotions with spontaneous ease is seen in *Svapnavāsavadatta passim*. For sheer emotional power too, Vāsavadattā in the dream-scene will bear the palm. Bhāsa has pictured her in this scene as an exquisite multi-dimensional emotional complex, blending at once, such varied and conflicting feelings like tender love and rapturous delight on one side and nervousness, excitement, fear and surprise on the other—all these kept under check by the overwhelming spell of a mighty grief; evoking many *rasa-s* simultaneously; *karuṇa* (pathos), *vipralambhaśṛṅgāra* (wistful love), *bhayānaka* (fear) and *adbhuta* (wonder).

Here is a random example of a small couplet packed with emotional power, which describes Udayana looking in retrospect with pathetic tenderness on the days of the supposedly dead Vāsavadattā's romantic apprenticeship with him in *viṇā*.

bahuśo-'pyupadeśeṣu yayā mām-īkṣamāṇayā /
hastena srasta-koṇena kṛtam-ākāśa-vāditam //

Fondly rivetted, her amorous intent gaze,
During *viṇā* lessons, on mine, her teacher's face;
Umpteen times, the *viṇā's* bow, she slipped unaware,
And her fingers played on the empty vacant air.

We have here an artistic picture of two hearts—one boxed within the other, as it were—the heroine's heart of the early romantic days throbbing with the first thrills of love, enshrined in miniature, within the walls of the hero's heart, now burning with heart-rending memories of the past. Bhāsa is a wizard of words! His crafty skill with words here is comparable to a photographic feat of modern cinematography, where such tricks of enclosing a figure or a whole scene within the outline of another figure are part of their stock-in-trade.

Other Works of Bhāsa

The question has often been asked: did Bhāsa write any more dramas, besides the thirteen now recovered? Was he also, like Kālidāsa, equally skilled in drama as well as in poems? If so, did he write any *mahākāvya* or *khaṇḍakāvya*, now lost for ever? Or did he, like Bhavabhūti and many other later writers like Jayadeva or Vedānta Deśika, produce books both in literary and śāstraic fields? Questions such as these, admit of no easy answers. There are, no doubt, some vague pointers to conclude that he might have written more dramas. Scholars, ever ready to catch at a straw, have indulged in speculations of all kinds. Efforts have also been made to father one or two poetical works and a work on dramaturgy on him. I shall not go into hair-splitting controversies here, but shall content myself with providing just a broad-spectrum view. The fact of the matter is, there is no clinching evidence to decide that Bhāsa really wrote any other book. The fairly large number of verses, ascribed to Bhāsa in the old anthologies, is the only so-called evidence, on the basis of which, scholars have made endless speculations. Scholars are unanimous about the poetic beauty of these Bhāsa-verses. Dr. Sarup describes them as "chiselled pieces of marble" or as "exquisite little pictures" and finds in them "the impassioned expressions of the poet's inmost soul." But, opinion is divided about whether all these verses can be really Bhāsa's or not. The critical eye of some scholars has compared the style and the thought-content of these verses with that of Bhāsa's published dramas and found a non-Bhāsite ring in some of them. Ingenious efforts have also been made, sometimes successfully, to find suitable places for some of these verses in the available plays. One of these, which is a typical benedictory verse, provides the ground to infer that it could be the *nāndī-śloka* of some lost drama. From another verse, describing winter with similes of Bhāsite manner, Dr. Pusalker infers that it "belonged to some other work of Bhāsa, now lost to us." Another of these Bhāsa-verses, in a light vein, describing the glory of drink, is actually found in *Mattavilāsa-Prahasana*, a satirical farce, of the early 7th century. This has provoked futile controversies about Bhāsa's authorship of this play too. But it must be put down as a case of simple wrong ascription of the verse to Bhāsa by the anthologist. Ganapati Sastri has pointed out that a verse of *Avimāraka* is actually found "in a slightly modified form" in Śārṅgadhara's anthology. The learned Sastri has also suggested the possibility of another *Bālacarita* drama by Bhāsa, centering round the boyhood of Rāma, similar to the extant play on Kṛṣṇa's life, on the basis of a verse quoted in *Sāhityadarpaṇa* and the explanation of the commentator thereon.

These inferences, which are of the nature of mere speculation, have at least some substance behind them. But the effort of a scholar to father a poem (*kāvya*) called *Viṣ ṇudharma* on Bhāsa, on the strength of a eulogistic verse in a late work of the 12th cent. and its commentary, has nothing to commend itself, as it springs from wrong interpretation of a corrupt text. Likewise, the attribution of a work on dramaturgy to Bhāsa merely on the strength of some quotations in Rāghavabhaṭṭa's commentary on Śākuntala—which, strangely enough, has received the approbation of Dr. Keith—should also be set aside as doubtful, until more reliable evidence is unearthed.

Yajñaphala

A brief reference must also be made here to the drama *Yajñaphala*, also fathered on Bhāsa. This play in seven Acts, dramatising the story of the Bālakāṇḍa of *Rāmāyaṇa*, was published by Rajavaidya Kalidas Sastri in 1941. Pandit Gopaladatta Sastri of Jaipur, who was also associated with the publication of this play, however, declared a year later that he was the real author of this play and also confessed that it was cold-blooded forgery. He referred to three secret "Keys", which he had concealed in it, to prove his authorship. But the editor maintained that his two MSS. of the 17th and 19th century were both genuine and that Gopaladatta Sastri had indulged in some mischief.

The whole case was examined *in extenso* by Dr. R.N. Dandekar and later by Prof. G.C. Jhala. Both of them were agreed that the drama was a clever forgery by some competent Pandit but differed about details. Dr. Dandekar held that the MS. dated 1670 A.D. was really old and that the secret key *"Bhāsānukārī"* alone was genuine. He refuted the claim of Gopaladatta Sastri, which would have made the play a mid-twentieth century manipulation. Prof. Jhala held the second MS. also to be fabricated and thought it was a modern forgery. According to Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar, "*Yajñaphala* is a clever imitation of Bhāsa's plays by some Sanskrit poet of the 11th or 12th cent. A.D." It is a matter of gratification to the academic world that though all the typical characteristics of the thirteen Bhāsa plays, (including the grammatical archaisms!) have been ingeniously foisted upon this attempted fabrication with "terrible efficiency", as remarked by Mr. Ayyar, the scholarly eye has cut through the veil and exposed the hand of the forger. "Truth," as I have observed elsewhere in the context of a similar exposure of a fabricated Kālidāsa--inscription in my Presidential Address to the Classical Sanskrit Section of the Aligarh session of the All India Oriental Conference, "has an uncanny way of cracking the toughest of walls and sneaking out through the most trivial of cracks!"

8

Critical Appraisal

ramyaṁ jugupsitam-udāram-athāpi nīcam
ugraṁ prasādi gahanaṁ vivṛtaṁ ca vastu /
yad-vāpyavastu kavi-bhāvaka-bhāvyamānaṁ
tan-nāsti yan-na rasa-bhāvam-upaiti loke //

—Dhanañjaya, *Daśarūpaka*

Things pleasing, things repulsive;
Grand, mean; fierce, gentle; subtle, manifest;
And lo! the big nothing too—rolling in the hearts
Of the feeling poet and the vibrant critic;
All is fit—aye, nothing in the world's unfit—
For the ringing thrills of that emotional transport
Of Beauty's frenzied sway, we call *Rasa.*

Among Sanskrit critics, Vāmana was the first to recognise the superiority of drama among all literary forms and declare that the drama bore the palm among the poet's creations on account of its immense possibilities for variety and compared it, in this respect, with painting. (*sandarbheṣu daśarūpakaṁ śreyaḥ; taddhi citram, citrapaṭavat*). Vāmana's remark is made from the standpoint of the readers or spectators. Likewise, from the standpoint of the creative writer too, the drama has been glorified as the culmination of the poet's art (*nāṭakāntam kavitvam*). This latter remark enshrines a great truth about the distinction between a piece that is only to be read or heard and one that has to be seen too, in other words, between *śravya kāvya* and *dṛśya-kāvya*, to use the familiar terminology of Sanskrit critics. In poems, the poet speaks directly and whatever is said is the projection of the poet's personality on the theme. Drama is different; here the dramatist has to stand aside and let his characters speak in their widely divergent voices. The dramatist has to live successively the lives of every one of his characters and shift from one to another in quick succession and also project sharply contrasted physical environments and psychological moods every time. It is this multi-dimensional projection that makes the dramatist's task more difficult and calls for considerably superior talent.

The works of all great dramatists will bear this out. The following could serve as a pertinent illustration from Bhāsa's *Svapnavāsavadatta.* Struck by the beauty of the long line of white cranes, speeding along the clear blue autumn sky, Udayana tells his jester:

ṛjvāyatāṁ ca viralāṁ ca natonnatāṁ ca
saptarṣi-vaṁśa-kuṭilāṁ ca nivartaneṣu /
nirmucyamāna-bhujagodara-nirmalasya
sīmām-ivāmbara-talasya vibhajyamānām //

This lovely white line of cranes flying high and low;
Here, straight and long; there, in sparse-strewn row;
And, mark, wheeling round with shapely grace, they do show
The supreme charm of the Great Bear's starry bow
On this sky, bright like the snake, shedding slough; how fine
Doth indeed it look, like heaven's dividing boundary line!

Pointing out the scene to the king, the Vidūṣaka has just observed that on the clear azure sky of autumn, the white cranes looked beautiful like the decorated arm of Balarāma. And close on the heels of the king's description follows the excited invitation by the maid of Padmāvatī to look at the cranes flying together in a line, charming like a row of white flowers, strung in a garland.

We have here the beauty of an identical natural scene, seen through the different eyes of a king, his jester and a palace-maid, each coming out with a different image. There is more beauty than what meets the eye in these similes. It is impossible for the responsive *sahṛdaya* not to be struck by the dramatist's subtle art, which appears to have assumed three different sets of eyes and three different hearts, all at once, to give three totally different perspectives to the description. Bhāsa's genius has, with the characteristic spontaneity of a born poet, tuned the imagery in each case to the temperament of the individual. Every one of the three images has a special aptness for the person using it and is a fine projection of his or her psychological background. With his concern for the security of his frontiers with hostile neighbours and intimate acquaintance with boundary-marks usually painted white, the king sees a frontier-line. The brāhmaṇa Vidūṣaka, on the other hand, with his mind fed with *puraṇic* lore sees Balarāma's arm and the young palace--maid with her tender sensibilities and preoccupations with gardens, flowers and garlands, sees a line of flowers in it! Quite apart from the generality of kings, in the present case of Udayana, the image of the boundary-line has a special appropriateness, on account of his obsession with frontier clashes and the over-throwal of the usurper, Āruṇi ! A closer look at the three similes here, reveals yet another touch of subtle art, revealing Bhāsa's deep insight into human psychology. The image of the serpent's belly just wriggled out of the slough to picture the bright azure-blue of the autumn sky and the image of the line of white boundary stones now curved, now straight, now raised, now low and so on are both complete in every way, reflecting the fully cultivated aesthetic sensibilities of the king and helps conjure up an integral picture of the beauty of the scene. As against this, the Vidūṣaka's is a clumsy comparison, which highlights only the blending of two colours and throws proportion (and propriety too?) to the winds. The maid's simile too is sketchy and leaves a truncated impression. We have here a striking instance of the chiselled perfection of Bhāsa's dramatic vision. The three figures reflect the relative intellectual capacity and aesthetic sensitivity of the three characters with rare accuracy and verisimilitude. This analysis of the three images conceived by Bhāsa here, could well serve to demonstrate the infinite potentialities for the expression of the highest talent in the construction of dramatic dialogue and the highly subtle ways of the working of the spontaneous art of a great dramatist.

Though Sanskrit critics like Kuntaka in his *Vakroktijīvita* have recognised the importance of this kind of adaptation to the changing environment and temperament of persons in other forms of poetic composition too, the drama has this speciality about it, that unlike in the narrative forms of the epic and the novel, the writer's individual personality has no place at all for expression in the drama. The mind that weaves a drama can no longer be of the 'he' or 'she' who writes, but has to be merged *in toto*, for the nonce, with the characters it creates. This is not the only point of differentiation between drama and other forms. Unlike the epics and other forms with select readership, the dramatist has to cater to people of widely divergent levels and tastes, from the *elite* to the groundlings. The true dramatist of the stage that Bhāsa was, he did not ignore the groundlings. Mention has already been made of the drunkard-scene in *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* with its pronounced groundling-orientation. The white-washer scene of *Pratimā* is another instance of a scene with groundling-appeal.

Coming to details of Bhāsa's dramatic technique, we have tried to provide the reader with a glimpse of the various facets of his dramatic art in the critical exposition of the thirteen plays in the foregoing chapters.

We shall confine ourselves here to aspects, not covered earlier or to reiterate the earlier ones, where necessary.

Economy is hailed as one of the chief characteristics of all great art. Bhāsa's effective use of silence in his plays to express intense emotional situations with high dramatic effect is a clear phase of such artistic economy. The undelivered message of Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa to Daśaratha, Udayana's reply through sigh and silence to Padmāvatī's request for instruction in *vīṇā* and Rāma's prostration in silence in response to Daśaratha's suggestion to crown him king are but some of the many instances where Bhāsa has shown the truth of the adage 'Speech is silvern, but silence is golden' in the world of drama too! The place of silence is sometimes taken by monosyllables. A fine instance is the august "*bhoḥ*" of Yaugandharāyaṇa, when he first sees his antagonist and a whole picture of his greatness is then conjured up by the latter's remarks about the impact of that single stentorian syllable, which fills the hall. In the technical language of Sanskrit literary criticism, these are all brilliant instances of *Dhvani*, the immense suggestive power of the word.

Another typical technique freely adopted by Bhāsa, to serve a variety of dramatic purposes, is his trick of making his characters read the thoughts of others from their faces. This is used in the prologue of *Avimāraka* to shift the conversation to the garden, which is then used to usher in the elephant-episode of the main action. It serves as a convenient expedient to give a sharp shift to the conversation in Act I of *Pratimā* from the mirror to the coronation. In the same act, Sītā divines, likewise, Avadatikā's suppressed desire to laugh and this becomes a lever to introduce the *valkala*-episode.

Irony is Bhāsa's deft trick for producing multiple dramatic effect. In the touching dialogue between the wounded and incapacitated Duryodhana and his little son, too innocent to understand the father's plight, we have irony resulting in *karuṇa-rasa* (pathos); whereas in the amusing dialogue between the young captive Abhimanyu with his disguised father Arjuna and uncle Bhīma, we have a fine counter-instance of irony as an adjunct of *hāsya-rasa* (humour). We have irony of situation too in both these cases, for as rightly remarked by W.H Hudson, the two "are often found in combination." However, we have to look to his masterpiece *Svapnavāsavadatta* for Bhāsa's irony at its emotional heights. The disguised companionship of Vāsavadattā with Padmāvatī within Udayana's own palace-precincts provides the most fertile ground for the operation of tragic irony (sometimes with comic overtones too) and

Bhāsa, the past-master of this technique, has exploited it to full advantage. Times, without number, the pent up soul of Vāsavadattā blurts out something or other about Udayana or something else related to her real self and finds itself in a quandary. When Udayana's beauty is doubted, she abruptly blurts out that he is beautiful. When Padmāvatī waxes eloquent about Udayana's love for her and expresses a genuine doubt as to whether he could have loved Vāsavadattā so much, her soul bursts open and declares unwittingly that his love for Vāsavadattā was much greater! In all such cases, she has to summon up all her resources of ready wit to wriggle out of such awkward situations of her own creation. The climax of situational irony is reached when a cruel fate assigns to her the task of preparing the garland for *her* rival to wed *her own* husband and, what is still more touching, the mystic herbs to be strung include one that would stamp out the co-wife (in this case, her own self!). She instinctively spurns it but finds herself in an awkward corner, when the maid questions why. Again, her ready wit alone helps her parry the question with her quick and apt retort: "His first wife is already dead. Where is the co-wife now to stamp out?"

For powerful representation of varied emotions, which constitute the soul of drama, Bhāsa's wide variety of themes provides endless scope and we have already dwelt on some of these in the preceding chapters. A few more instances are given here. One of the most touching instances of pathos (*karuṇa-rasa*) in Bhāsa is this grim picture, drawn by Yaugandharāyaṇa's mortified soul in *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*, of the shocking contrast between the plight of his captured king, worshipping his gods, lifting his chained hands clattering with the noise of manacles and his previous worship in his palace-temples, accompanied by Vedic chants and the music of kettle-drums.

snātasya yasya samupasthita-daivatasya
puṇyāha-ghoṣa-virame paṭahā nadanti /
tasyaiva kāla-vibhavāt tithi-pūjaneṣu
daiva-praṇāma-calitā nigalāḥ svananti //

Oh! what a fall is here, by the power of Time almighty!
He, for whom resounded, beating drums, sonorous mighty
After the palace-priests' loud recital of holy Vedas slowed,
When after his morning bath, he, his favourite gods adored;
Now, alas! lifts his shackled folded hands—my captive master—
In daily routine prayers; and his chiming fetters clatter!

There is pathos with a philosophic overtone in this consolation offered to the contrite Udayana in *Svpanavāsavadatta*, by Mahāsena's chamberlain, quite becoming the grey-haired old man!

kaḥ kaṁ śakto rakṣituṁ mṛtyu-kāle
rajju-cchede ke ghaṭaṁ dhārayanti /
evaṁ lokas-tulya-dharmā vanānāṁ
kāle kāle chidyate ruhyate ca //

Who can save a life, when Death himself doth call?
When the holding rope doth snap, can you stop the pitcher's fall?
Men of the hapless world, alas! are like myriad forest trees:
They are chopped and chopped again, to grow again at ease.

In this little couplet, where the old father bewails the loss of his middle son in *Madhyamavyāyoga*, Bhāsa demonstrates how simple figures could be deftly harnessed to express intensity of feeling.

yas-tri-śṛṅgo mama tvāsIn manojño vaṁśa-parvataḥ /
sa madhya-śṛṅga-bhaṅgena manas-tapati me bhṛśam //

Like unto a mountain was my family lovely,
Superbly branched with fine peaks three;
But now, alas! with its crumbled peak middle,
It burns my heart and blood doth curdle.

Bhāsa is not primarily a poet of love. Only three out of his thirteen plays are love-plays. Love in its twin phases of union (*sambhoga-śṛṅgāra*) and separation (*vipralambha-śṛṅgāra*) are both represented in these plays. Here is a sentimental outburst of passionate love in Avimāraka's brown study of the rapturous beauty of the princess, he rescued from the elephant.

praticchandaṁ dhātrā yuvati-viṣaye kinnu racitam
gatā vā strI-rūpaṁ katham-api ca tārādhiparuciḥ /
vihāya śriḥ kṛṣṇaṁ jala-śayana-suptaṁ kṛta-bhayā
dhṛtānya-strI-rūpaṁ kṣitipati-gṛhe vā nivasati //

Is she the model-mould cast by Brahmā
as feminine beauty's norm?
Or, is she the moon's beaming radiance,
concretised in woman's form?

Or, is't Lakṣmī herself, fled from Viṣṇu's
ocean-bed, in fear,
That lives in another woman's guise, in the
royal palace here?

In these romantic ruminations of a lover's "fine frenzy" comprising a series of fanciful doubts of the figure of speech *Sandeha* of Sanskrit rhetoricians, Bhāsa has almost set the model for all later love-poets, Kālidāsa downwards, to emulate.

In this confession of Udayana to his confidant, the jester, we have some fine contours of a picture of his past love for the lost Vāsavadattā.

smarāmyavantyādhipateḥ sutāyāḥ
prasthāna-kāle svajanaṁ smarantyāḥ /
bāṣpaṁ pravṛttaṁ nayanānta-lagnaṁ
snehān-mamaivorasi pātayantyāḥ //

Old memories rush, my friend, of the daughter of Avanti's king,
Remembering her kith and kin, at the hour of our eloping;
And slowly trickling down the tear-drops, lingering in the corner
Of her long lovely eyes, here, on this breast of mine, her secret lover.

As for the heroic sentiment (*vīra-rasa*), Bhāsa's plays abound with fine examples. Here is an instance from *Ūrubhaṅga* in the dying Duryodhana's consolation to his wife.

bhinnā me bhrukuṭī gadā-nipatitair-vyāyuddha-kālotthitair-
vakṣasyutpatitaiḥ prahāra-rudhirair-hārāvakāśo hṛtaḥ /
paśyemau vraṇa-kāñcanāṅgada-dharau paryāpta-śobhau bhujau
bhartā te na parāṅmukho yudhi hataḥ, kiṁ kṣatriye rodiṣi //

Why weep, my dear, hero's scion? Your husband wasn't struck retreating;
Here, look at my brow-line bones, smashed in duel by the fierce *gadā* reeling!
Witness, here, the pearl-chain made redundant by blood-lines on the chest, broken!
And mark these arms at beauty's height, with bleeding wounds as their armour golden!

It is impossible to miss the strong overtones of pathos in these heroic words of Duryodhana in the throes of death. We have here a fine blending of the heroic with the pathetic sentiment: the pathos of the situation making the heroism more heroic and the height of pure heroism at such a crucial moment making the pathos more pathetic! In the technical language of Sanskrit criticism, this would be a fine instance of what is known as *rasa-saṅkara*, which consists in the blending of two or more *rasa*-s and of which Sanskrit critics have recognised many different patterns.

As for humour (*hāsya-rasa*), Bhāsa's plays abound in all its forms: the subtle and the witty, the blatant and the ludicrous, the satiric and the ironic, verbal and situational, conscious and unconscious and so on. The humour of the *vidūṣakas* of Bhāsa, unlike that of their counterparts in later decadent Sanskrit drama, does not stoop to vulgar levels, nor stop with the ludicrous. The scene in *Svapnavāsavadatta*, where Vasantaka asks Udayana to speak out his preference between Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī (when both of them are watching it all from hiding, so close by) and ultimately succeeds in extracting an answer from him but later escapes with a dubious reply when his turn comes, is one of the most amusing scenes in Bhāsa. Equally amusing are the two scenes in *Avimāraka*; first, where Santuṣṭa poses to be learned to earn invitation for a meal and ends up with an ugly exposure of his illiteracy and is duped of his own ring too in the deal by the mischievous palace-maid and second, where he pretends to be a woman, when ushered into the harem of the princess. Along with Maitreya of *Cārudatta*, Bhāsa's Vasantaka and Santuṣṭa are the crowning comic figures of the Sanskrit stage. But for Bhāsa, the Sanskrit theatre would have had practically nothing to show, which could bear some little comparison with the humorists of world drama.

Of Bhāsa's technique of foreshadowing and suspense, I shall content myself with just a dim hint. The opening Act of *Svapnavāsavadatta* contains two blessings of the Tāpasī on Padmāvatī and the disguised Vāsavadattā: that the former should get a husband, who would be her match and that the latter should soon be reunited with her separated husband. It is interesting to note that these two blessings foreshadow the future directions of the plot. The whole play is a fulfilment of these two very blessings. It is equally interesting to note that Kālidāsa has a adopted a closely similar technique in his great *Śākuntala* where the blessings of the sages on Duṣyanta in the opening Act, on Śakuntalā by Kaṇva and the old anchorite women in Act IV, along with Durvāsa's curse on her in the same Act are vital adjuncts of the suspense element in its masterly plot-scheme.

Regarding the element of 'chance' or "the long arm of coincidence", which is said to have been condemned by Aristotle "preferring the probable-impossible to the improbable-possible", it must be confessed that all great dramatists, including Shakespeare, have had recourse to accidents in the development of their plots. Many examples like the dropping of the fateful handkerchief in *Othello*—a case of pure chance—have been pointed out. The accidental dropping of the ring in the water in Śākuntala, on which the whole plot oscillates, is an instructive parallel from Kālidāsa. Unlike in *Pratimā* where, as already observed, the 'chance' element somewhat jars, Bhāsa has perfected its use in *Svapnavāsavadatta*, where the crowning dream-scene is just the outcome of a pleasant accident. Unlike in *Pratimā*, there is no trace of the improbable in it.

Bhāsa has his defects too—the earlier immature plays, having a greater share of these. We can do no more than make a passing hint of these in a general way, eschewing details. Even the *Svapnavāsavadatta*, for all its chiselled perfection, is not totally free from blemishes. It is rather surprising that Bhāsa has not cared to explain why Padmāvatī was not brought to the *samudragṛha*, as planned and announced earlier after all the big fuss, made about her illness and the excited hurry shown by all. This is the one serious lacuna in the construction of this scene, the greatest gift of Bhāsa's muse, otherwise superb in conception as well as execution. As for the other plays, though many of them do touch great heights in select scenes, they all betray fluctuations in their artistic quality. *Pratimā*, as already pointed out, is extremely weak in its later Acts. *Avimāraka* suffers partially by the melodramatic touch in its characters and incidents and by its forced *denouement*. *Abhiṣeka* and the early *Mahābhārata* plays are devoid of any real inventive flashes, which distinguish a great dramatist. Some of these are no dramas at all, except for their outward form. An over-dose of the supernatural disfigures *Bālacarita* and imposes a strain on dramatic plausibility. *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*, for all its fine tempo and rapid action, reflects a certain lack of maturity in its use of subtleties on the stage and in its effort to elicit the none-too-covetable applause of the groundlings. Perhaps *Cārudatta* could have been different, but is left fragmented with a truncated plot. The balance between the poetic and the dramatic elements is heavily tilted in *Ūrubhaṅga* and, to some extent, in *Pañcarātra* too. It looks strange that Bhāsa, for all his deep dramatic insight, could not get over the weakness for poetic gimmicks like *anuprāsa* and has allowed himself the luxury of writing ornate prose in dramatic dialogues, of which Kālidāsa is totally free and the undue excesses of which proved to be the bane of Bhavabhūti. Even a fairly mature play like *Pratimā* shows lingering traces of this indulgence in alliterative sound effects.

How much of his dramatic art is all his and how much he owed to his forerunners, it is impossible to guage, as the blind alley of ancient dramatists comes to a dead stop with Bhāsa. The case of his poetic art, however, is different. In this field, the debt that he owes to Vālmīki and Vyāsa is considerable. He drank deep of the two great epics, which not only gave him his plots but also the inspiration for his pure poetry, shorn of the artificialities of its later decadent phases. A student of Vālmīki can easily pick up happy turns of expressions in Bhāsa, which have trickled down from the epic. "*krodham-āhārayaṁstīvram*" in *Abhiṣeka* is a typical epic-repetition, of which there are scores of examples in Vālmīki. The dying Daśaratha's plea to Kausalyā "*aṅgaṁ me spṛśa kausalye* . . ." is an almost verbatim reproduction of Vālmīki's verse. Rāma's instruction to Sugrīva after Vālin's death "*kriyatām asya saṁskāraḥ*" also, likewise, is sure to remind the student of Vālmīki of the famous verse in Yuddhakāṇḍa, where Rāma declares to Vibhīṣaṇa; "Enmities end with the grave. Now perform his funeral rites with due honour. He is as good a brother to me, as to you."

> *maraṇānatāni vairāṇi nirvṛttaṁ naḥ prayojanam /*
> *kriyatāmasya saṁskāro mamāpyeṣa yathā tava //*

The reproduced words and the similarity of the contexts compel the conclusion of a deliberate echo. In Karṇa's statement in *Karṇabhāra*—that no effort is lost in battle, since you stand to gain both ways; earn heaven if you die or fame if you survive—

> *hato'pi labhate svargaṁ jitvā tu labhate yaśaḥ /*
> *ubhe bahumate loke nāsti niṣphalatā raṇe //*

is closely reminiscent of Krsna's similar exhortation to Arjuna in *Bhagavadgītā*.

> Killed, you gain Heaven; winning, you rule the world:
> Therefore, rise up, oh Arjuna, firmly resolved to fight.

> *hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṁ jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm /*
> *tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ //*

These resemblances in words and ideas apart, Bhāsa has drawn inspiration from Vālmīki for his art and technique too. His comparison of the dying Daśaratha smeared with the dust of the ground to a wild elephant bears the impress of Vālmīki, who frequently compares Daśaratha in that state to an elephant, captured fresh, or to an elephant unwell and ill at ease. Bhāsa drew his inspiration for the governing principle behind his *pratimāgṛha*- episode from Vālmīki. He has modelled his own novel scheme of the gradual revelation of the three tragic truths to Bharata on the example of Vālmīki's Kaikeyī, who administers the bitter drug to Bharata in small doses of gradually increasing potency! Apart from the two epics, Bhāsa's familiaritty with vedic and upaniṣadic thoughts too peeps through some of his conceits and expressions. The metaphorical equation of the sense-organs with turbulent horses in Rāma's description of the glory of bark-garments in the first Act of *Pratimā* is certainly reminiscent of the famous figure of the *Kaṭhopaniṣad.*

Bhāsa's poetic gift finds expression in the numerous descriptions of divergent objects and in widely different patterns. His descriptions of the speed of the chariot in *Pratimā*, of the earth as seen from an aerial car above in *Avimāraka*, of the precincts of a penance-grove in *Svapnavāsavadatta* provided the models for Kālidāsa's finished pictures of these identical themes. We have fine pictures of darkness in *Avimāraka* and *Cārudatta.*

timiramiva vahanti mārga-nadyaḥ
pulina-nibhāḥ pratibhānti harmya-mālāḥ /
tamasi daśa diśo vinaṣṭa-rupāḥ
plava-taraṇīya ivāyam-andhakāraḥ //

Like rivers, do the roads with streams of darkness, drift,
The rows of mansions, like dunes of sand uplift,
The visages of ten quarters all, have in the darkness lost their hue:
Oh, the darkness! methinks, you need a raft to row it through!

For sheer picturesque effect, the description of the old brāhmaṇas from *Pañcarātra* can serve as a fine example.

rājñāṁ veṣṭana-paṭṭa-ghṛṣṭa-caraṇāḥ ślāghya-prabhūta-śravā
vārdhakye-'pyabhivardhamāna-niyamāḥ svādhyāya-śūrair-mukhaiḥ /
viprā yānti vayaḥ-prakarṣa-śithilā yaṣṭi-tripāda-kramāḥ
śiṣya-skandha-niveśitāñcita-karā jīrṇā gajendrā iva //

> With hand on disciples' shoulders and gait tottering,
> With the sacred vedic chant, their lips e'er muttering,
> With their austerities, in old age, doubly enhanced,
> Old, erudite brahmans, thin and weak with age advanced,
> At whose feet, royal kings, their turbaned heads humbly place,
> Walk along light, with support-sticks in three-footed grace,
> Like elephants decrepit, plying majestic pace.

These are fine instances of the poetic figure known to Sanskrit rhetoricians as *svabhāvokti.*

A closing word about Bhāsa's handling of figures of speech (*alaṅkāras*). Like worldly ornaments, poetic ornaments too depend on the right discriminatory sense, dictating their use at the right time and place and in the right measure, for their total effect. Over-ornamentation can prove a bane to poetry, as much as inartistic ornamentation and lesser poets are a usual prey to both. Bhāsa's earlier writings are not free from such excesses and improprieties. But he gained mastery in handling *alaṅkāras* with his mellowing years, where they are least strained. There is a peculiar spontaneity about them, when he is at his best. As with all great writing, embellishments then serve as handmaids to the expression of the emotional experience. They are a means, never an end. At such heights, Bhāsa exemplifies the great truth stated by Ānandavardhana that figures and embellishments rush to the mind of the poet in his *rasa-samādhi*, as if competing with each other. With such poetic moods, *alaṅkāras* do not hang as isolated appendages but are assimilated with the contextual tissue.

We have two excellent instances of such masterly use of poetic figures in the two concluding verses of the second Act of *Avimāraka*, where the hero, in high spirits, describes, first, the evening sky and then the nightfall. The simile (*upamā*) of the *ardhanārīśvara* form of Śiva--Pārvatī, merged in one single combine of *nīla-lohita*—to use the fine phrase of Kālidāsa—to describe the fusion of the red and blue halves of the sky—red to the west and blue to the east—is in perfect unison with the context, where the ground is set for the union of the hero and heroine and is, besides, a fine projection of the hero's own mood, fully absorbed in the thought of the blending of his soul with his sweetheart's. The poetic fancy (*utprekṣā*) of disguise, that follows in the concluding verse, to describe the totally altered face of the world with the incoming night is also beautifully integrated with the plot-fabric. To the poet's eye, the world is taking on a disguise, as it were, through a new make--up by changing its dress, decorations, etc. The sun which was the round "*tilaka*" mark on the forehead is erased, the spangled stars provide a changed ornamental necklace; the day's mantle of the sun's heat is replaced by a totally different cloak, the pleasantly cool night breeze; the active men of the day, moving about openly are replaced by the lovers, lurking about suspiciously. The picture of the altered visage is thus complete. But what really matters with the use of the *utprekṣā* here, more than its completeness, its inherent beauty and individualised power, is the dramatist's art, which has woven it into the texture of the theme and character. The hero's mind is just set to assume the disguise of a robber to gain entry into the princess's apartments. The poet's fancy of disguise to describe the nightfall here is thus a fine reflex of the hero's mood. From the point of plot-structure, it foreshadows the hero's disguise-adventure of the next Act and serves as a subtle psychological link between the incidents of the two Acts.

To these two figures common to rhetoricians of the orient and the occident, we may add another, typical of Sanskrit Rhetorics, which has analysed poetic figures with incisive vision and swelled their number beyond a hundred, where no western country could reach anywhere near even half the score! We have a fine instance of the figure *tadguṇa* in the summary description of the lifting of the Virāṭa-cows by the Kaurava army in *Pañcarātra*. The army of cows sandwiched between the enemy's chariots is enveloped in dust. Their natural hues are lost. They are reduced to one monotonous colour—the colour of dust. But the marauders beat the animals hard to drive them fast. The whip-marks reveal the concealed variety and charm of their variegated colours! With a vein of pathos, the messenger draws a succinct picture of the moving herd to the king.

eka-varṇeṣu gātreṣu gavāṁ syandana-reṇunā /
kaśā-pāteṣu dṛśyante nānā-varṇa-vibhaktayaḥ //

When all the cows, the selfame colour bear
Of the canopied dust of a thousand chariot,
The whip-marks reveal on their bodies fair
The hidden shades of their colours myriad.

The cows losing their natural colour shades and taking on the colour of the near-by dust clouds results in *tadguṇa*. And the exposure of the original colours will constitute, according to Appayadīkṣita, a different figure *pūrvarūpa*. To go into these niceties here will mean kicking up more scholarly dust!

Bhāsa's poetic vision has made the very dust, the centre of a poetic figure here and made it "a thing of beauty", reminiscent of the vedic *ṛṣi's* integral vision of beauty, which saw sweetness in the blowing wind, the flowing rivers and the growing plants and crowned his song with a fine peroration: "Hurrah! Sweet indeed is the dust of the earth!" (*madhumat pārthivaṁ rajaḥ*). Nothing is not beautiful to "the poet's eye", rolling "in a fine frenzy", which sees things of beauty everywhere and cries out with Keats that they are "a joy for ever". When the process of poetic creation is complete, the direction of his aesthetic experience is reversed for the connoisseurs of his poetry. To the *sahṛdaya*, the poet's joy crystallised as poetry abides as a beauty for ever! To us today, Bhāsa's *rasānubhava* in this picture of dust shall remain a beauty for ever!

9

Conclusion: Footprints

andhāste kavayo yeṣām panthāḥ kṣuṇṇaḥ parair-bhavet /
pareṣāṁ tu yad-ākrāntaḥ panthās-te kavi-kuñjarāḥ //
—Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita, *Gaṅgāvataraṇa*

Poets of calibre weak are like the poor crippled blind,
Who, on beaten paths of earlier folk, their sole refuge find,
But the inspired poet great, is of the majestic elephant's kind,
Whose onward march creates new tracks, for lesser mettle to trail behind.

Great men of all walks of life drop on the still waters of time like gigantic stones producing endless concentric waves of influence, in all directions. In the literary field, in particular, the greatness of an author is best judged by the degree and extent of his impact on contemporary and future literature, the inspiration he provides to succeeding generations of poets, the new trends he sets for others to follow or the new *genres* he creates for others to imitate or amplify. Vāmīki is the classical example in Sanskrit. His *Rāmāyaṇa* has been the fountain-head of inspiration for a thousand poets, over twenty-five centuries! The thirst to create new versions of the epic in the many regional languages from the days of Kamban (Tamil) to Tulasīdāsa (Hindi), has had its vibrations beyond Indian shores in distant Java too! There is, perhaps, no Sanskrit poet, worth his salt, whose writings do not betray the influence of Vālmīki in some form or other. Likewise, Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* has become the prototype for two hundred *dūta-kāvyas* and the craze still continues unabated. Expressions of Shakespeare or Kālidāsa have become stock-idioms of writers in their languages.

Bhāsa's footprints on the sands of Sanskrit literature continue in an unbroken series for many centuries, though it must be confessed that they wane gradually and vanish at last after the mediaeval period, when his dramas ceased to be current coins. Kālidāsa is the earliest of the surviving masters of drama, who came under the Bhāsa-spell. He did not make a secret of his unstinted admiration for Bhāsa. Mention has already been made of his eloquent homage to Bhāsa in his maiden drama. What is more interesting to the student of Bhāsa than even this is the fact that this influence of the Bhāsa-spell was not confined to his early years alone. We have abundant evidence to conclude that Bhāsa continued to haunt Kālidāsa's creative moods even in his mellow years. One of the four famous verses of the fourth Act of his *Śākuntala*, which are universally hailed as the acme of excellence of his most mature creation, is clearly patterned after Bhāsa, so much so, that the very words are repeated. Of the Aśokavanikā grove, Bhāsa wrote that Mandodarī would not pluck any leaves from it, out of her love for the plants, although quite fond of decorations herself.

yasyāṁ na priya-maṇḍanāpi mahiṣī devasya mandodarī
snehāl-lumpati pallavān . . . . /

Of his Śakuntalā, Kālidāsa wrote that she would not pluck a single leaf from the plants she reared, out of her love for them, though quite fond of decorations herself.

nādatte priya-maṇḍanāpi bhavatāṁ snehena yā pallavam /

The parallelism is perfect and even the words and phrases are repeated.

This is just a sample. A close comparison of Kālidāsa and Bhāsa exposes countless cases of borrowing of ideas and technique by Kālidāsa from Bhāsa, though it is true that the Kālidāsa-touch has, more often than not, improved upon Bhāsa. In fact, a verse of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* is said to contain a veiled reference to adverse criticism of his works by a contemporary critic called Diṅnāga. Dakṣiṇāvartanātha, commenting on this verse, has recorded a tradition that Diṅnāga had accused Kālidāsa of plagiarist tendencies and actually demonstrated through examples that many themes and ideas found in Kālidāsa were already there in earlier works. Ganapati Sastri rightly observes that this could "only be the imitation of the ideas of Bhāsa and others."

When Kālidāsa, the uncrowned king of Sanskrit drama could not resist being thus carried away by the powerful Bhāsa-current, it was but natural that other dramatists and poets should have come under the magic spell of his muse. It is no small tribute to Bhāsa that he has left the impress of his genius on the long line of Sanskrit dramatists, Śūdraka, Viśākhadatta, Bhavabhūti, Śrīharṣa, Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa, Dhīranāga and many others—we may add on names, *ad libitum*. We cannot do more than scant justice to this subject here and have to content ourselves with a perfunctory peep-vision of the image of Bhāsa reflected in later literature, through just a few random examples.

Viśākhadatta's drama of political intrigue with no female character of consequence is modelled upon *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*. The *pratijñā* of Cāṇakya is the central pivot of *Mudrārākṣasa* too. Cāṇakya's dedication to his king and his Machiavellian moves are definite echoes from Yaugandharāyaṇa's character. The thrilling encounter-scene between the two giants Cāṇakya and Rākṣasa is an improved version of the *tête-á-tête* between Yaugandharāyaṇa and his rival. *Mṛcchakaṭika*, the famous social play of Śūdraka, is probably an amplified adaptation of Bhāsa's *Daridracārudatta* of which the present *Cārudatta* is a fragment—though the interrelation of these two plays is a hotly debated issue. Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava* bears the impress of *Avimāraka* in many respects, the chief among them being the tigress-scene, which imitates the elephant-scene. The germs of allegorical plays, which developed as a separate genre after Kṛṣṇamiśra exploited it for sectarian ends through his *Prabodhacandrodaya,* are there in Bhāsa's *Abhiṣeka* and *Bālacarita*, which present supernatural abstractions on the stage in human cast. With his constitutional poverty in humour, Bhavabhūti looked up to Bhāsa—described as the "smile" of the muse, by Jayadeva—for creating a humorous scene and ended up with a poor imitation of the beautiful interlude in *Pratimā* centering round the non-vegetarianism of the rākṣasas, in his *Uttararāmacarita*-scene, describing the hospitality to meat--eaters in Vasiṣṭha's āśrama. Bhāsa's technique of his *prastāvanās*, his dramatic irony and his deft handling of the motifs of dream, disguise, verbal lapses, *māyā* etc. have found clever followers and poor imitators galore in the centuries of the progress and decline of the Sanskrit theatre.

This influence did not remain confined to drama alone, but is traceable in the poetic works of the great masters too. Here again, random samples should suffice. A verse of Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita,* which is as good as a copy of a verse from *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*, was pointed out long before by Ganapati Sastri. The first canto of Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*, glorifying Duryodhanaṇ and referring to his many sacrifices, has clear echoes of *Pañcarātra*. The fine situational irony in Manmatha's boast in Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* that he could subdue Śiva himself, reminds the student of Bhāsa of a very similar declaration by Vālin in *Abhiṣeka* that even Viṣṇu would be powerless if he stood before him.

The upshot of it all is simply this. The great Kālidāsa, and practically every other great dramatist who came in his wake, drank deep at "the Pierian spring" of Bhāsa. Thus, this final touchstone of greatness provides a true measure of the dimensions of Bhāsa's art and vindicates his claim to the title of Mahākavi. Ānandavaradhana may have asserted that only "two or three or, at best, five or six" in the long multi-faceted queue of poets would pass muster as Mahākavi. And Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita may have echoed this spirit, when he extolled Poesy as a rare gift, far superior to the gift of Music and exclaimed with his delightful tone of satire:

gāyanti vīṇā api veṇavo'pi
jānanti bālāḥ pāśavo'pi cedam /
kāvyāni kartuṁ ca parīkṣituṁ ca
dvitrā bhaveyur-na tu vā bhaveyuḥ //

Even metal strings and wild bamboos sing,
Infants and animals too nod to their musical ring.
But, to lisp in poetry or its beauty's core measure,
Two or three abide, or none indeed, for sure!

Even by these exacting standards of evaluation, Bhāsa whose plays evoked the admiration of and provided the inspiration to Kālidāsa and, what is more, scored far higher than Kālidāsa's plays themselves in point of stage-worthines, has a secure place among the Mahākavis of Ānandavaradhana's ranking. He is certainly of the class of inspired poets, the "two or three or none indeed" of Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita's witticism, the chosen few of the divine muses, ushered into the world "to lisp in poetry" and lull its sorrows!

I have not said this in any mood of hero-worship. We cannot be blind to the deficiencies and faults of Bhāsa, which have also been touched upon in this book. It will be pertinent here to recall the words of Alexander Pope:

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.

What we have in Bhāsa is "the archaic elegance of the writings of the Rishis" as excellently characterised by Ganapati Sastri. The defects and shortcomings are very much there; only they do not mar the total effect. They are *śakti-tiraskṛta*—to use Ānandavaradhana's well known phrase. In other words, they do not obtrude on your overall enjoyment of the piece. And this is precisely the quality of the creations of genius.

Nearly twelve centuries ago, Daṇḍin remarked that, though dead, Bhāsa was very much alive through his dramas. We may go a step further and say that Bhāsa lives not only through *his* plays but also through his art and technique, which have gradually trickled down through their images in Sanskrit Drama and its regional ramifications and permeated through the entire fabric of the living theatre of our modern languages. Our contemporary dramatists and connoisseurs of drama in our regional languages are apt to forget or even kick down the ladder, which has made their present heights possible. Conveniently poised on the topmost or near-top rungs of the ladder of the dramatic art and enjoying a commanding view of the prospect, they may not be conscious even of the fact that the lowest rung of the ladder, which has raised them, was a certain Bhāsa, who plied their own art in a different tongue, more than two millennia ago. A verse from *Abhinavabhāratī* can provide the necessary corrective to such thinking. Freely rendered, the verse says, "If, today, our minds with cultivated sensibilities are able to climb higher and higher and command fuller visions of the sublime truths of Beauty in Art, without an iota of strain, let us not forget that we owe this to the ladders of discriminative wisdom, already set up there for us by our good old path-finders." In the ringing rhythm of the original:

> *ūrdhvordhvam āruhya yad-artha-tattvaṁ*
> *dhiḥ paśyati śrāntim avedayantī /*
> *phalaṁ tad-ādyaiḥ parikalpitānāṁ*
> *viveka-sopāna-paramparāṇām //*

The subtle note of warning implied in this verse from Abhinavagupta's monumental commentary on *Nāṭyaśāstra* can serve as a fitting reminder to us of the twentieth century, of the debt that Indian theatre owes to its earliest surviving pioneer—Bhāsa.

[†]Devanāgarī Version of Sanskrit Verses and Prose-Extracts Quoted in the Book

Page 1 एकस्य तिष्ठति कवेर्गृह एव काव्यम्
अन्यस्य गच्छति सुहृद्भवनानि यावत् ।
न्यस्या विदग्ध-वदनेषु पदानि शश्वत्
कस्यापि सञ्चरति विश्व-कुतूहलीव ॥

—Quoted by राजशेखर, **काव्य मीमांसा**
G.O.S., Baroda, 3rd edition, 1934; Revised by K.S. Ramaswamy Sastri Śiromaṇi; Adhyāya 4, page 13)

Page 8 तत्त्व-बभुत्सोः कथा वादः ।

—केशवमिश्रः **तर्कभाषा**, p. 97
(Ed. S. M. Paranjape, Poona, 1917)

Page 10 सूत्रधार-कृतारम्भैर्नाटकैर्बहुभूमिकैः.।
सपताकैर्यशो लेभे भासो देवकुलैरिव ॥

—बाणः, **हर्षचरितम्**; Introductory verse 16

*भास-नाटक-चक्रेऽपिच्छेकैः क्षिप्ते परीक्षितुम् ।
स्वप्नवासवदत्तस्य दाहकोऽभून्न पावकः ॥

—राजशेखर, quoted in **सूक्तिमुक्तावली**
of जल्हण; 4.48

Page 16 यातास्ते रस-सार-सङ्ग्रह-विधिं निष्पीड्य निष्पीड्य ये
वाक्तत्त्वेक्षु-लतां पुरा कतिपये तत्त्वस्पृशश्चक्रिरे ।
जायन्तेऽद्य यथायथं तु कवयस्ते तत्र संतन्वते
येऽनुप्रास-कठोर-चि-त्रयमक-श्लेषादि-शल्कोच्चयम् ॥

—मङ्खः, **श्रीकण्ठचरितम्**; 2.42

[†]For Bhāsa's plays *Bhāsanāṭakacakram* critically edited by C.R. Devadhar, Poona, 1937 has been used for citing references.

*English rendering of this verse is given on page 88.

Page 18 *कारणं तु कवित्वस्य न संपन्नकुलीनता।
धावकोऽपि हि यद् भासः कवीनामग्रिमोऽभवत्॥
—राजशेखरः (?), **कविविमर्शः** (?)

Page 23 प्रथितयशसां भास-सौमिल्ल-कविपुत्रादीनां प्रवन्धान् अतिक्रम्य वर्तमान-कवेः कालिदासस्य क्रियायां कथं वहुमानः।
—कालिदासः, **मालविकाग्निमित्रम्**; (प्रस्तावना)

नवं शरावं सलिलैः सुपूर्णं
सुसंस्कृतं दर्भ-कृतोत्तरीयम्।
तत्तस्य मा भून्नरकं स गच्छेद्
यो भर्तृ-पिण्डस्य कृते न युद्ध्येत्॥
—भासः, **प्रतिज्ञायौगन्धरायणम्; 4.2**

नवं शरावं सलिलस्य पूर्णं
सुसंस्कृतं दर्भ-कृतोत्तरीयम्।
तत्तस्य मा भून्नरकं च गच्छेद्
यो भर्तृपिण्डस्य कृते न युद्ध्येत्॥
—कौटिल्यः, **अर्थशास्त्रम्**; 10.3
(अधिकरण 10, अध्याय 3)

Page 25 अहं खलु तावत् कर्तव्यकर-स्त्री-कृत-सङ्केत इव शाक्यश्रमणको निद्रां न लभे।
—भासः, **चारुदत्तम्**; 3.9. (8-9)

Page 27 देवानामिदमामनन्ति मुनयः कान्तं क्रतुं चाक्षुषं
रुद्रेणेदमुमाकृत-व्यतिकरे स्वाङ्गे विभक्तं द्विधा।
त्रैगुण्योद्भवमत्र लोकचरितं नानारसं दृश्यते
नाटयं भिन्नरुचेर्जनस्य वहुधाप्येकं समाराधनम्॥
—कालिदासः, **मालविकाग्निमित्रम्**, **1.4**

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*This verse is part of a forgery. *Kavivimarśa of Rājaśekhara is itself chimera.*

Page 33 वाल्मीकि-गीत - रघुपुङ्गव - कीर्तिलेशै-
स्तृप्तिं करोमि कथमप्यधुना बुधानाम् ।
गङ्गाजलैर्भुवि भगीरथ-यत्न-लब्धैः
कि तर्पणं न विदधाति नरः पितृणाम् ।।
—भोजः, **रामायणचम्पूः**; 1.4

Page 37 हं-ह-ह ! अहो पतिव्रतायास्तेजः !
देवाः सेन्द्रादयो भग्ना दानवाश्च मया रणे ।
सोऽहं मोहं गतोऽस्म्यद्य सीतायास्त्रिभिरक्षरैः ।।
—भासः, **अभिषेकनाटकम्**; 2.18

Page 38 अस्ताद्रि-मस्तक-गतः प्रतिसंहृतांशुः
सन्ध्यानुरञ्जित-वपुः प्रतिभाति सूर्यः ।
रक्तोज्ज्वलांशुक-वृते द्विरदस्य कुम्भे
जाम्बूनदेन रचितः पुलको यथैव ।।
—भासः, **अभिषेकनाटकम्**; 4.23

Page 45 अपराधमनुद्दिश्य परित्यक्तस्त्वया विभो ।
युद्धे त्वत्पाद-शुश्रूषां सुग्रीवः कर्तुमिच्छति ।।
—भासः, **अभिषेकनाटकम्**; 1.8

Page 46 तत्र हि पादयोरस्मि पतितः —
समं वाष्पेण पतता तस्योपरि ममाप्यधः ।
पितुर्मे क्लेदितौ पादौ ममापि क्लेदितं शिरः ।।
—भासः, **प्रतिमानाटकम्**; 1.6

Page 53 पितुर्मे को व्याधिः ? हृदयपरितापः खलु महान्,
किमाहुस्तं वैद्याः ? न खलु भिषजस्तत्र निपुणाः ।
किमाहारं भुङ्क्ते ? शयनमपि ? भूमौ निरशनः,
किमाशा स्याद् ? दैवं; स्फुरति हृदयं वाहय रथम् ।।
—भासः, **प्रतिमानाटकम्**; 3.1

Page 54 पितुः प्राण-परित्यागं मातुरैश्वर्य-लुब्धताम् ।
ज्येष्ठभ्रातुः प्रवासं च त्रीन् दोषान् कोऽभिधास्यति ।।
—भासः, **प्रतिमानाटकम्**; 3.4

Page 63

सुचिरेणापि कालेन यशः किञ्चिन्मयार्जितम् ।
अचिरेणैव कालेन भरतेनाद्य सञ्चितम् ॥

—भासः, **प्रतिमानाटकम्**; 4.26

Page 66

यथा समुद्रोऽतिमहान् यथा च हिमवान् गिरिः ।
ख्यातौ रत्नाकरौ तद्वन्महाभारतमुच्यते ॥

सर्वेषां कविमुख्यानामुपजीव्यो भविष्यति ।
पर्जन्य इव भूतानामक्षयो भारतद्रुमः ॥

—व्यासः, **महाभारतम्**

(*Mahābhārata*, Critical edition, Poona, Ādi-parvan, Ed., Vishnu S. Sukthankar, 1933, Appendix I, 32.24, page 892 and Appendix I, 1.55, page 885)

Page 68

एषा खलु द्रौपदी —
दुःशासन-परामृष्टा संभ्रमोत्फुल्ल-लोचना ।
राहु-वक्त्रान्तर-गता चन्द्र-लेखेव शोभते ॥

—भासः, **दूतवाक्यम्**; 1.7

Page 70

शिक्षा क्षयं गच्छति काल-पर्ययात्
सुबद्ध-मूला निपतन्ति पादपाः ।
जलं जल-स्थान-गतं च शुष्यति
हुतं च दत्तं च तथैव तिष्ठति ॥

—भासः, **कर्णभारम्**; 1.22

Page 72

अपि प्रविष्टं धरणीमप्यारूढं नभःस्थलम् ।
सर्वत्रानुगमिष्यन्ति शरास्ते कृष्ण-चक्षुषः ॥

—भासः, **दूतघटोत्कचम्**; 1.31

न तु जतुगृहे सुप्तान् भ्रातॄन् दहन्ति निशाचराः
शिरसि न तथा भ्रातुः पत्नीं स्पृशन्ति निशाचराः ।
न च सुतवधं संख्ये कर्तुं स्मरन्ति निशाचराः
विकृत-वपुषोऽप्युग्राचारा घृणा न तु वर्जिता ॥

—भासः, **दूतघटोत्कचम्**; 1.47

Page 74

मुच्यतामिति विस्रब्धं ब्रवीति यदि मे पिता ।
न मुच्यते तथाप्येष गृहीतो मातुराज्ञया ॥

—भासः, **मध्यमव्यायोगः**; 1.36

Page 77
वञ्चना-निहतं श्रुत्वा सुतमद्याहवे मम ।
मुखमन्तर्गतास्राक्षमन्धमन्धतरं कृतम् ।।
—भासः, **ऊरुभङ्गम्**; 1.37

Page 83
सत्यं बृहत्कथाम्भोधेर्बिन्दुमादाय संस्कृताः ।
तेनेतरकथाः कन्थाः प्रतिभान्ति तदग्रताः ।।
—धनपालः, **तिलकमञ्जरी**; Introductory verse 21

Page 87
*धण्णा सुराहि मत्ता धण्णा सुराहि अणुलित्ता ।
धण्णा सुराहि ण्हादा धण्णा सुराहि संव्विदा ।।
—भासः, **प्रतिज्ञायौगन्धरायणम्**; 4.1

Page 94
बहुशोऽप्युपदेशेषु यया मामीक्षमाणया ।
हस्तेन स्रस्तकोणेन कृतमाकाशवादितम् ।।
—भासः, **स्वप्नवासवदत्तम्**; 5.6

Page 98
रम्यं जुगुप्सित-मुदारमथापि नीचम्
उग्रं प्रसादि गहनं विवृतं च वस्तु ।
यद्वाप्यवस्तु कवि-भावक-भाव्यमानं
तन्नास्ति यन्न रसभावमुपैति लोके ।।
—धनञ्जयः, **दशरूपकम्**; 4.86

Page 99
ऋज्वायतां च विरलां च नतोन्नतां च
सप्तर्षि-वंश-कुटिलां च निवर्तनेषु ।
निर्मुच्यमान-भुजगोदर-निर्मलस्य
सीमामिवाम्बर-तलस्य विभज्यमानाम् ।।
—भासः, **स्वप्नवासवदत्तम्**; 4.2

Page 102
स्नातस्य यस्य समुपस्थित-दैवतस्य
पुण्याह-घोष-विरमे पटहा नदन्ति ।
तस्याद्य काल-विभवात्तिथि-पूजनेषु
दैव-प्रणाम-चलिता निगलाः स्वनन्ति ।।
—भासः, **प्रतिज्ञायौगन्धरायणम्**; 3.4

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*This verse is in Prakrit.

Page 103

क: कं शक्तो रक्षितुं मृत्यु-काले
रज्जुच्छेदे के घटं धारयन्ति।
एवं लोकस्तुल्यधर्मा वनानां
काले काले छिद्यते रुह्यते च॥

—भास:, **स्वप्नवासवदत्तम्**; 6.10

यस्त्रिश्शृङ्गो मम त्वासीन्मनोज्ञो वंश-पर्वत:।
स मध्य-शृङ्ग-भङ्गेन मनस्तपति मे भृशम्॥

—भास:, **मध्यमव्यायोग:**; 1.23

प्रतिच्छन्दं धात्रा युवति-विषये किन्नु रचितं
गता वा स्त्री-रूपं कथमपि च ताराधिप-रुचि:।
विहाय श्री: कृष्णं जलशयन-सुप्तं कृत-भया
धृतान्य-स्त्री-रूपं क्षितिपति-गृहे वा निवसति॥

—भास:, **अविमारकम्**; 2.3

Page 104

स्मराम्यवन्त्याधिपते: सुताया:
प्रस्थान-काले स्वजनं स्मरन्त्या:।
बाष्पं प्रवृत्तं नयनान्त-लग्नं
स्नेहान्ममैवोरसि पातयन्त्या:॥

—भास:, **स्वप्नवासवदत्तम्**; 5.5

भिन्ना मे भ्रुकुटी गदा-निपतितैर्व्यायुद्ध-कालोत्थितै-
र्वक्षस्युत्पतितै: प्रहार-रुधिरैर्हारावकाशो हृत:।
पश्येमौ व्रण-काञ्चनाङ्गद-धरौ पर्याप्त-शोभौ भुजौ
भर्ता ते न पराङ्मुखो युधि हत: किं क्षत्रिये रोदिषि॥

—भास:, **ऊरुभङ्गम्**; 1.51

Page 107

मरणान्तानि वैराणि निर्वृत्तं न: प्रयोजनम्।
क्रियतामस्य संस्कारो ममाप्येष यथा तव॥

—वाल्मीकि:, **रामायणम्**; 6.112.26

हतोऽपि लभते स्वर्गं जित्वा तु लभते यश:।
उभे बहुमते लोके नास्ति निष्फलता रणे॥

—भास:, **कर्णभारम्**; 1.12

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥

—व्यासः, **भगवद्गीता**; 2.37

Page 108 तिमिरमिव वहन्ति मार्ग-नद्यः
पुलिन-निभाः प्रतिभान्ति हर्म्य-मालाः ।
तमसि दश दिशो विनष्ट-रूपाः
प्लव-तरणीय इवायमन्धकारः ॥

—भासः, **अविमारकम्**; 3.4

राज्ञां वेष्टन-पट्ट-घृष्ट-चरणाः श्लाघ्य-प्रभूत-श्रवा
वार्धक्येऽप्यभिवर्धमान-नियमाः स्वाध्याय-शूरैर्मुखैः ।
विप्रा यान्ति वयः-प्रकर्ष-शिथिला यष्टि-त्रिपाद-क्रमाः
शिष्य-स्कन्ध-निवेशिताञ्चित-करा जीर्णा गजेन्द्रा इव ॥

—भासः, **पञ्चरात्रम्**; 1.5

Page 110 एक-वर्णेषु गात्रेषु गवां स्यन्दन-रेणुना ।
कशा-पातेषु दृश्यन्ते नाना-वर्ण-विभक्तयः ॥

—भासः, **पञ्चरात्रम्**; 2.4

Page 112 अन्धास्ते कवयो येषां पन्थाः क्षुण्णः परैर्भवेत् ।
परेषां तु यदाक्रान्तः पन्थास्ते कविकुञ्जराः ॥

—नीलकण्ठदीक्षितः, **गङ्गावतरणम्**; 1.17

Page 113 यस्यां न प्रिय-मण्डनापि महिषी देवस्य मन्दोदरी
स्नेहाल्लुम्पति पल्लवान्……………………।

—भासः, **अभिषेकनाटकम्**; 3.1

नादत्ते प्रिय-मण्डनापि भवतां स्नेहेन या पल्लवम् ।

—कालिदासः, **अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तलम्**; 4.9

Page 115 गायन्ति वीणा अपि वेणवोऽपि
जानन्ति बालाः पशवोऽपि चेदम् ।

काव्यानि कर्तुं च परीक्षितुं च
द्वित्रा भवेयुर्न तु वा भवेयुः ॥
—नीलकण्ठदीक्षितः, **शिवलीलार्णवः**; 1.14

Page 116 ऊर्ध्वोर्ध्वमारुह्य यदर्थतत्त्वं
धीः पश्यति श्रान्तिमवेदयन्ती ।
फलं तदाद्यैः परिकल्पितानां
विवेक - सोपान-परम्पराणाम् ॥
—अभिनवगुप्तः, **अभिनव भारती**
(G.O.S. Baroda, 2nd edition, 1956;
Revised by K. S. Ramaswami Sastri,
Śiromaṇi; Vol. I, Adhyāya 6, page 278)

Glossary

This Glossary contains only Sanskrit words—technical and otherwise—which the general reader, equipped in English language and literature may find difficult to comprehend. Some of the words here may be quite familiar to Indian readers with a Hindu background; but have been included for the benefit of those who may not have that background. Technical words of western literary criticism (e.g. Anagnorisis, Climax, Conflict, *Denouement*, Foreshadow, Sophoclean Irony, Tragic/Comic Relief, Suspense, Tragic Hero etc.) have not been explained here.

abhiṣeka

Lit. sprinkling or pouring water, but frequently used to denote coronation of a king.

Adbhuta (*rasa*)

One of the nine *rasas* of Indian Aesthetics. See *Rasa*. The basic emotion behind *adbhuta-rasa* is wonder (*vismaya*).

Alaṅkāra

Lit. ornament or embellishment, commonly used to denote a figure of speech. *Alaṅkāras* are broadly classified into three kinds: *śabdālaṅkāra*, *arthālaṅkāra* and *ubhayālaṅkāra*, according as the locus of embellishment is sound or sense or both. Starting with four in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśātra*, the number of alaṅkāras crossed the hundred-mark by the end of 16th cent. See *infra*: *Anuprāsa, Mudrā, Pūrvarūpa, Svabhāvokti, Tadguṇa, Upamā, Utprekṣā, Yamaka.*

amṛta

The food of the gods, according to Hindu mythology. (*cf.* 'ambrosia' of Greek and Roman mythology). In their joint search of a potion for immortality, the gods and the demons churned the milk-ocean. Many wonderful things came out. At last when the pot of *amṛta* did emerge, Viṣṇu shrewdly manoeuvred to let the gods have their share first and at the end, the demons stood cheated! The result was that gods alone became immortal. The word, lit., means 'not dead', but is frequently used to denote 'immortal' or 'immortality'.

Anuprāsa

A *śabdālaṅkāra* (see under *Alaṅkāra*), in which a sound, usually consonantal, is repeated to produce an effect, similar to alliteration. Sanskrit Rhetorics recognises many forms of it.

Anuṣṭubh

A metre (common to Vedic and Classical Sanskrit) with 8 syllables in each of its four quarters. Most popular among early writers of epics, Purāṇas, philosophic and scientific treatises etc.

Apsarases

A class of *devayoni* (*q.v.*) beings. They are celestial nymphs, who dwell in Heaven and dance in Indra's court. It is a recurring theme of the Purāṇas that they are commissioned by Indra to disturb the severe austerities of sages on earth, for fear of being ousted by them. Though Purāṇas give their number in thousands, less than a dozen are well known. (*e.g.* Menakā, Rambhā, Tilottamā, Urvaśī).

aśoka

A tree which produces red flowers in spring. According to poetic convention, a kick by the left foot of a beautiful damsel quickens florescence in a refractory *aśoka* tree.

aśoka-vanikā

A small grove of *aśoka* trees, as part of the royal palace-complex in Hindu Architecture.

āśrama

(1) Hermitage; (2) One of the four stages in a man's life, according to the Vedic religion. See *varṇāśrama.*

astra

A mystic missile, which operates by the power of secret *mantras.* There are separate *mantras* for releasing it and for withdrawing its action. They are capable of causing destruction by fire, rain, storm etc., corresponding to the deities of the concerned elements invoked. The *astra* with Brahmā as the controlling deity, known as *Brahmāstra,* is regarded as the ultimate in destructive power.

Aucitya

One of the major canons of literary beauty and centre of aesthetic power in Sanskrit Literary Criticism, according to which 'propriety' is the ruling principle, which governs all the vital centres of beauty in literature, like *alaṅkāra* (figure), *guṇa* (merit), *rīti* (style), *bhāva/rasa* (sentiment), *dhvani* (suggestion) etc. All these cease to have any power when propriety is violated. Absence of *aucitya* (*i.e., anaucitya*) acts as the root cause in disrupting the overall harmony of the aesthetic experience (*rasa-bhaṅga*).

bahubhūmika

A punning epithet (in Bāṇa's verse on Bhāsa) applied to Bhāsa's plays as well as temples, with wholly different meanings, as applied to each. The expression means 'having many *bhūmikā-s'*. *Bhūmikā* has two meanings: (1) roles/characters in a drama; (2) floors/stories of a building. With Bhāsa's plays, it means 'having numerous characters on their cast' and with temples, it means 'provided with many floors'. See p. 21 for a different interpretation.

Bhāṇa

One of the ten major types of Sanskrit drama. (See Nāṭaka). It is a monologue in one Act, catering to the tastes of the common folk, with a voluptuary as the lone character, describing his amours and bragging about his rogueries. In tune with such a theme, *Śṛṅgāra* and *Vīra* are the prevailing sentiments.

bharata-vākya

The concluding benediction in a Sanskrit play, usually placed in the mouth of the hero. The expression strictly means 'actor's utterance' (*bharata*=actor; *vākya*=sentence). It is so called because the hero utters this in his capacity as actor and *not* as the character of the play. It is related to the dramatist's contemporary environment and age.

Bhāsānukāri

Bhāsa+anukāri, meaning, imitation of Bhāsa.

Bhayānaka (*rasa*)

One of the nine rasas of Indian Aesthetics. See *rasa*. The basic emotion in *bhayānaka rasa* is fear (*bhaya*).

Brahmarṣi

A brāhmaṇa sage (brahman=brāhmaṇa+ṛṣi), regarded as the topmost in the hierarchy of sages. See *ṛṣi.*

brahmāstra

Astra (*q.v.*) governed by the deity Brahmā.

cakra

Means primarily a wheel, but is used to denote also the discus in one of the four hands of Viṣṇu, serving as a weapon.

cākyārs

Cākyār is a Malayāḷaṁ word used to denote the traditional actors of the Kerala stage.

caṇḍāla

Generally denotes 'an outcaste' or 'the lowest among the mixed castes'.

dakṣiṇā

Honorarium offered to priests in cash or kind for professional services in a sacrifice or other religious ritual.

Dāna-vīra (*rasa*)

One of the four forms of *Vīra-rasa* (*q.v.*). The basic emotion behind *Dānavīra-rasa* is the spirit (*utsāha*) displayed by a person in making great gifts at personal risk or involving considerable suffering or sacrifice.

deva-kārya

Lit., 'work of the gods', *i.e.*, the purpose for which God comes from Heaven as an incarnation.

deva-yoni

This epithet (meaning lit. 'Born of the Gods') is employed as a common name for different semi-divine beings of Hindu Mythology, which recognises ten classes among these. *Apsarases, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Rākṣasas, Siddhas, Vidyādharas, Yakṣas* etc. are grouped under this category. All of them possess typical supernatural powers and perform different functions. *Apsarases* are the only females among these and are regarded as mistresses of *Gandharvas.* See *Apsarases, Gandharvas, Rākṣasas, Vidyādharas.*

Dharma-vīra (*rasa*)

One of the four forms of the heroic sentiment or *Vīra-rasa* (*q.v.*). The basic emotion behind *Dharma-vīra* is the spirit (*utsāha*) displayed by a person in the practice of *dharma,* usually concomittant with courage and self-sacrifice for the cause of *dharma.*

Dhvani

A cardinal concept of literary beauty in Indian Literary Criticism. First propounded by Ānandavardhana (*circa* 9th cent.), it has since earned the distinction of being the corner stone of the various literary theories. In a word, the central doctrine may be stated thus: the peak of beauty in art lies in deft concealment, as opposed to blatant exposure. What is suggested may be *vastu, alaṅkāra* or *rasa,* the last being the last word in suggestive beauty. Innumerable forms and patterns of suggestion have been recognised and illustrated from the works of classical masters of poetry.

dūta-kāvya

A poem in which the basic theme is the sending of a messenger, usually by a lover to his sweetheart or *vice versa.* Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* set the model for countless imitators through many centuries, but none of these could reach anywhere near the sublimity of the original. At the hands of writers who wrote didactic poems, the form enjoyed further extensions, in respect of theme, but the superb art of Kālidāsa degenerated as a mere tool of instruction!

gadā

Mace; a familiar weapon of ancient Indian warfare, with a long rod as handle and a heavy spherical butt at the end.

gadā-yuddha

A combat between two warriors using the *gadā* (*q.v.*) as the weapon for offence as well as defence.

Gandharvas

See *devayoni.* According to Purāṇic mythology, Gandharvas are celestial singers, singing on the *viṇā* and are often associated with Apsarases (*q.v.*) as their consorts.

go-grahaṇa

Seizure of cattle wealth from a clan of cowherds, as a form of punishment.

Gotra

Dynastic appellation of a sage, used as a family name by all persons tracing descent from the former. Hindus of the higher hierarchy have preserved an unbroken tradition of their descent from some sage or other of hoary antiquity, who is regarded as the earliest ancestor of that lineage. This name is termed their '*gotra*'. All families traditionally linked with one sage claim him as their common primogenitor. Names of various sages—celebrated and otherwise—occur among these progenitors of families. The *gotra* tradition is thus a continuous history of an individual through many millennia.

guru-daksiṇā

Dakṣinā (*q.v.*) offered to a preceptor by a disciple at the conclusion of his whole period of instruction.

Hāsya (*rasa*)

One of the nine *rasas* of Indian Aesthetics. The basic emotion behind this sentiment of humour is mirth (*hāsa*).

Īhāmṛga

One of the ten major types of Sanskrit drama. See *Nāṭaka*. The distinctive features of this type are: (1) Characters are divine; (2) Plot based on a divine theme, centering round a clash among gods for a celestial beauty; involving elopement, abduction, assault, stampede and the like; (3) Similar to *Vyāyoga* in being a play with vigorous sentiments (*dīpta-rasas*) and in being an one-Act play with twelve heroes, the difference being that here, the woman involved is a goddess.

Kalpa-sūtras

One of the six branches of literature, ancillary to Vedic studies, known as *Vedāṅgas*. *Kalpa-sūtra* is the collective name for the four divisions of sūtras, included under this head: *Śrauta-sūtras*—manuals for Vedic sacrifices; (2) *Gṛhya-sūtras*—manuals for domestic rituals; (3) *Dharma-sūtras*—ethical manuals for the four *varṇas* and four *āśramas*: (4) *Śulba-sūtras*—manuals for the construction of altars etc.

kāñcana-pārśva

Having golden sides. *kāñcana* (golden)+*pārśva* (side).

Karuṇa (*rasa*)

One of the nine *rasas* (*q.v.*) of Indian Aesthetics. The basic emotion behind *karuṇa-rasa*, the Sanskrit parallel of the sentiment of pathos, is sorrow (*śoka*).

kavaca-kuṇḍala

Compound of *kavaca* and *kuṇḍala*; *kavaca* = armour, used as protection for the chest against blows, *kuṇḍala* = ear ornament with a spherical pendant.

kāvya

Generic term in Sanskrit for any form of poet's compositions, including the visual forms (*dṛśya*) like drama, as opposed to other forms like epics, lyrics, prose works etc., which are only to be heard (*śravya*). Though any work of a poet is a *kāvya*, popular usage restricts its use to the latter forms only.

khaṇḍa-kāvya

A poetic composition limited in range and scope, in comparison with the classical epic form (mahā-kāvya) which is large in extent and consists of many cantos (*sargas*).

madhyama

As an adjective, the word means 'middle' and as a substantive, it denotes 'a person or thing in the middle'. Ghaṭotkaca improvised this name for the middle son of the brāhmaṇa to call him; but by a coincidence Bhīma responded, since the name fitted him too, being the middle son of Kuntī, the first wife of Pāṇḍu.

Mahā-kavi

Lit. a great poet; i.e., a poetic genius, but not necessarily writer of a mahā-kāvya.

mahā-kāvya

Lit. great poem, the greatness being measured not only by the extent of the poem but also by the loftiness of the theme and the hero. The conventional definition of a *mahā-kāvya* specifies many other essential attributes.

Malayāḷaṁ

Language spoken by the people of Kerala.

mantra

Originally, it meant the hymns of the Vedas, as opposed to the '*brāhmaṇa*' part, dealing with the performance of the *yajña* (*q.v.*). *Mantra* and *brāhmaṇa* together constituted the Veda. Later, the word came to mean any mystic combination of letters/words (sometimes without any apparent sense), which could confer innumerable kinds of benefits on persons through chanting cum meditation.

māyā

Supernatural power vested in the gods and also *deva-yonis* (*q.v.*), including *rākṣasas*, by which they could do practically anything under the sun, at will.

Mudrālaṅkāra (= *mudrā+alaṅkāra*)

A figure of speech, wherein the words in a sentence or a stanza are arranged with such exceptional skill that by mere collocation or juxtaposition, they suggest a number of new words as a sort of back-echo, though these echoed words have no syntactical or contextual relation at all. The benedictory verse of *Svapnavāsavadatta*, for example, is a prayer addressed to Balarāma. But Bhāsa has cleverly managed to suggest the names of Udayana, Vāsavadattā, Padmāvatī and Vasantaka without any contextual force.

udaya-navendu-savarṇāvāsava-dattābalau balasya tvām /
padmāvatīrṇa-pūrṇau *vasanta-kamrau bhujau pātām //*

Nāndī-(*śloka*/verse)

The technical name by which the benedictory verse of a drama is referred to. Rules of dramaturgy require that this verse must suggest the plot of the play. Many etymologies have been suggested for the word. (e.g. from √nand=to rejoice; from Nandī = Śiva's bull)

Nārada

A divine sage (*devarṣi*), who keeps continuously moving from one world to another, singing the glories of Viṣṇu on his *Vīṇā* and taking a live interest in human affairs. The *Bhagavad-gītā* speaks of him as the chief among the *devarṣis*. He is often described as taking secret delight in creating quarrels only to reconcile them ultimately for the common good. With such a back-ground, he serves as a convenient tool in the hands of dramatists for unravelling entangled knots of their plots.

Nāṭaka

Loosely used to denote drama, in general, the right generic term for drama being '*rūpaka*'. Strictly, *nāṭaka* is just one of the major types of dramas recognised by Sanskrit dramaturgy. *Nāṭaka* is the first, the most common and by far *the* most important among the ten major varieties of plays. Its superiority lies in its being the most complete representative of the numerous adjuncts of a drama, as detailed in *Nāṭyaśāstra.* Seven of these ten types are to be found among the plays of Bhāsa, viz., Nāṭaka, Prakaraṇa, Vyāyoga, Samavakāra, Vīthī, Utsṛṣṭikāṅka and Īhāmṛga; the three types unrepresented being Bhāṇa, Prahasana and Ḍima.

Some of the distinctive features of a Nāṭaka are: (1) Plot is drawn from well known stories of epics/purāṇas or historical events (2) the hero is a king or a similar person in high position (3) the dominant sentiment is *śṛṅgāra* or *vīra*; (4) plot-structure is marked by all the five *sandhi-s*

Nāṭikā

The most popular among the minor forms of drama called *Uparūpakas,* of which eighteen are recognised. The special features of Nāṭikā are: (1) Plot is invented; (2) the hero is a well known king; (3) the heroine is a young girl in the queen's harem; (4) female characters abound; (5) the play is in four Acts with plenty of music and dance.

Nāṭyaśāstra

Earliest extant work in Sanskrit on dramaturgy, ascribed to sage Bharata. Bharata is spoken of as *muni* by Kālidāsa. This gives a pre-Kālidāsa date for Bharata, who is placed in *circa* 2nd cent. A.D., assuming the Gupta age for Kālidāsa. The work will have to be dated much earlier when Kālidāsa is placed in the first century B.C.

Pañcarātra

An early philosophical school of Vaiṣṇavism, which probably originated in Kashmir in the pre-Christian era and acquired strengt and support from teachers of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* like Yāmunācārya and Rāmānujācārya. Vāsudeva is hailed as the Supreme Principle in this system. A typical tenet of this system is the theory of four Vyūhas—

Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha—of which the last three are identified with Jīva, Ahaṅkāra and Mind. The significance of the name Pañcarātra is variously explained.

Patākā-sthānaka

Broadly speaking, this consists of a subtle indication of future events of a drama through suggestive episodes or through punning dialogue. Different forms are recognised, of which some are analogous to the western concept of Dramatic Irony.

pradhāna-rasa

The sentiment (*rasa*) (*q.v.*) that predominates in any literary composition, the other sentiments being made artististically sub-ordinate to it.

Prakaraṇa

One of the ten major forms of drama in Sanskrit. (See *Nāṭaka*). Like *Nāṭaka*, *Prakaraṇa* is also a complete play, possessing all the adjuncts of a drama, outlined in *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The distinctive features of *Prakaraṇa* are: (1) Plot is invented outright or drawn from non-epic, non-purāṇic sources and completely refashioned; (2) the hero is lower than the rank of a king—a minister, brāhmaṇa or tradesman; (3) the heroine may be a courtesan or a housewife of middle class society: (4) has ten Acts (according to later texts); (5) follows *Nāṭaka* in other respects.

prastāvanā

Prologue of a drama, the main objective of which is to introduce the theme of the drama and its author to the audience. It commences with *Nāndī* and must contain, according to later texts, description of a season.

pratijñā = a pledge or solemn vow.

pratimā = statue, image.

pratimā-gṛha

A place where statues (of ancestors?) are installed to enable the public to visit and pay homage.

Purāṇas

Collections of historical/mythological stories, the main object of which is to impart the teachings of the Veda to the common people through the convenient medium of stories. Originally, there was probably only one *Purāṇa*, but later it got divided or multiplied into many, mostly to serve sectarian ends of theistic schools, *Vaiṣṇava*, *Śaiva* etc. The major *Purāṇas* are eighteen with an equal number of minor *Purāṇas*, known as *Upa-purāṇas*.

Pūrva-rūpa

A figure of speech, not known to earlier writers, but recognised by later critics like Jayadeva and Appayadīkṣita, but regarded by others as comprehended in *'tadguṇa'* (*q.v.*). The present writer has shown that Bhāsa's verse from *Pañcarātra* (see p. 120) clinches the issue in favour of accepting *Pūrvarūpa* as an independent *alaṅkāra*.

Puṣpaka-Vimāna

The aerial car called *Puṣpaka*, with the mystic power of carrying its occupants to any desired place, was presented by Brahmā to Kubera, from whom Rāvaṇa seized it.

rākṣasas

One of the *deva-yonis* (*q.v.*). They are evil doers, unlike the other *devyonis* and are inimical to *ṛṣis* and *yajñas*. They kill the sages and spoil their sacrifices.

Rasa

Rasa is the most fundamental doctrine of Indian Aesthetics, developed by early literary critics, though its final emergence as a logical system took some centuries. Briefly stated, *Rasa* is the state of climactic ecstasy, to which the mind is spontaneously lifted by great poetry (or any other form of art, for that matter). This sublime mental state is regarded as the transmutation by art (or literature) of any one of the nine inherent emotions (*sthāyi-bhāvas*) by the operation of their causes and accessories, projected through any of the art-media. Accordingly, *rasas* are also usually regarded as nine, though opinion varies about the number. Thus *Rati* (love) is transformed as *Śṛṅgāra*, *Utsāha* (spirit) as *Vīra*, *Śoka* (sorrow) as *Karuṇa*, *Hāsa* (mirth) as *Hāsya*, *Krodha* (anger) as *Raudra*, *Bhaya* (fear) as *Bhayānaka* and so on.

rasānubhava = experience of *rasa* (*rasa+anubhava*) *rasa-samādhi*

The sublime state of bliss, termed as *rasa* in Indian Aesthetics is one in which the mind is totally absorbed in the state of bliss, so much so, that all else is erased out of existence, for the nonce. On this ground, it is equated with the yogin's state of *samādhi.*

rasa-saṅkara

Blending together of two or more *rasas* within the ambit of one single art-experience, such blending being possible, when the *rasas* concerned are not mutually opposed.

ṛṣi

A seer or sage. Primarily, *ṛṣi* denotes one who discovers or unravels *mantras* through his intuitive vision (*mantra-draṣṭā*).

Raudra (*rasa*)

One of the nine rasas of Indian Aesthetics. The basic emotion in the case of *Raudra-rasa* is anger (*krodha*).

śabda-citra

General expression for any figure of speech, in which the centre of poetic charm lies in the 'sound' of the word as opposed to its 'sense'.

sahṛdaya

Lit. one who has a heart similar to or identical with that of the poet or creative artist. One whose sensibilities are similar to those of the poet or artist and can, therefore, share his vision of beauty. The approximate equivalents in English are 'connoisseur' and 'aesthete'.

Śakti

A technical word of Sanskrit Literary Criticism, denoting the poet's inborn power or genius, which gives him the inspiration to write poetry. *Pratibhā* is a more commonly current Sanskrit synonym.

Śakti-tiraskṛta

Lit. 'Covered up by the poet's genius'; said of such faults or lapses whose power to obstruct the integral aesthetic experience of a literary creation is set at naught by the over-riding impact of the overall sublimity of the experience, inherent in the creations of a great genius.

Śākya-śramaṇaka

A Buddhist monk. *Śramaṇaka* is a term common to monks of Jain, Buddhist and even Hindu (of the ancient phase) persuasion. *Śākya* denotes Buddhist.

Samavakāra

One of the ten major forms of Sanskrit drama. See *Nāṭaka.* According to the traditional history of Sanskrit drama, the first play ever staged was of this type. Its theme was 'Churning of the ocean'. It was produced by Bharata with the gods and demons as actors in an open theatre. Special features of *Samavakāra* are: (1) Plot related to clashes between gods and demons; (2) Must have 3 Acts, which successively taper down in length, the second Act being just a third of the first and the third Act, just a half of the second. The durations are specifically stipulated as: Act I—288 mts. Act II—96 mts. and Act III—48 mts., the whole play lasting 7 hrs. 12 mts. The theme of each Act contains a trickery, a stampede and a love affair; the nature of the love affair differing from Act to Act, being prompted by *kāma* (carnal urge), *artha* (material gain) and *dharma* (moral good) in the respective Acts. (3) The principal characters (heroes/villains) number twelve, distributed as four in each Act; (4) The principal sentiment is heroism (*vīra*).

Sambhoga-śṛṅgāra

See *Śṛṅgāra* (*rasa*).

samudragṛha

A place or a part of it, specially cooled by artificially contrived water-streams, water-spouts, fountains etc., to be used as a summer-house. The word '*samudra*' here has nothing to do with the familiar meaning of 'sea' but is used in its original etymological sense of 'that which wets or moistens'.

sapatāka

Punning epithet (in Bāṇa's verse on Bhāsa) applied to Bhāsa's dramas on the one hand and to temples on the other, as comparision for the dramas. The expression means, in either case, 'provided with *patākā*'. With respect to Bhāsa's dramas, *patākā* may have either its dramaturgical sense of 'sub-plot running concurrently with the main plot' or it may be an abbreviation of *patākāsthānaka* (*q.v.*), frequently met with in Bhāsa. In the case of temples, *patākā* means 'banner' or 'flag'. For a different interpretation, see p. 21.

Śārṅga = name of Viṣṇu's bow.

Śāstraic

Pertaining to śāstra. The word śāstra has a very wide connotation and includes the entire gamut of religious literature, namely the Veda and all its ancillary texts and also all the secular branches of learning, like the sciences and the arts. (cf. *Dharmaśāstra, Arthaśāstra, Kāmaśāstra, Aśvaśāstra, Saṅgītaśāstra* etc.).

Smṛti

One of the many ancient texts, written by authors of the stature of *ṛṣis*, dealing with *dharma*, to serve as a practical code of ethics. Their authority in matters of *dharma* is subordinate only to the *Veda* which they follow.

Śrāddha

An annual ritual performed generally by sons to propitiate their dead parents and their forbears (up to three generations) on the dates (*tithis*) of their demise.

Śrāddhakalpa

A practical manual for the performance of Śrāddha (*q.v.*).

śramaṇaka

A Jain or Buddhist monk. The word originally did not have any denominational restriction and referred to all monks/ascetics, who toiled for spirtual emancipation (including those of the Vedic or Hindu persuasion).

śramaṇikā

Feminine form of *Śramaṇaka* (*q.v.*)

Śṛṅgāra (rasa)

One of the nine *rasas* (*q.v.*) of Indian Aesthetics. The basic emotion behind *śṛṅgāra-rasa* is love (*rati*). *Śṛṅgāra* or love is recognised by early critics as the *rasa, par excellence.* It is chiefly of two types. The phase of love wherein the lovers are separated from each other and each is left to pine for the other is known as *vipralambha-śṛṅgāra* (love in separation). The brighter phase, where the lovers share the joy of each other's company is known as *sambhoga-śṛṅgāra* (love in union).

Śruti

Veda, so called because it is transmitted only through hearing and not by reading or any other mode of communication. Lit. the word means 'that which is heard'.

subhāṣita

Any statement (usually a verse or its part), expressing some universal truth in a beautiful manner, that it becomes a quotable quote. Lit. 'well-spoken'.

Sūtradhāra

The Director of a drama; lit. one who holds the thread (of the drama) in his hands. Scholars have tried to deduce the origin of Sanskrit drama from the puppet-show on the strength of this word, for it is in the puppet-show that the director of the show actually holds the threads to control and direct the movements of all the puppet-actors.

Svabhāvokti

A figure of speech, in which the centre of poetic charm lies in the exactitude of the description of the nature or behaviour of any object, animal, person etc.

Tadguṇa

A figure of speech, in which an object is described as acquiring the beautiful attributes of another by association or contact.

tarpaṇa

Offering water to propitiate dead parents or ancestors.

tripuṇḍra

The three parallel horizontal lines made on the fore-head, the ventral side of the trunk, the arms etc. with sacred ash (*bhasma/vibhūti*), regarded as a sect-mark of Śaivites, but applied by Śaivites as well as by non-sectarian smārtas.

Upamā

A figure of speech in which the object described is compared to another in respect of a specific attribute. (cf. Simile of English Rhetorics). Sanskrit rhetoricians have recognised numerous ramifications of this figure.

Upāsanā

A form of worship of gods/goddesses.

Utprekṣā

A figure of speech in which the object described is fancied as another on the basis of resemblance in attributes, actions etc. (cf. Poetic fancy of English Rhetorics).

Utsṛṣṭikāṅka

One of the ten major types of Sanskrit drama. See *Nāṭaka*. It is an one-Act play, teeming with pathos. The theme is the grief of women, wailing the loss of their dear ones after a fierce battle. The plot is usually based on well known episodes, modified where necessary by the dramatist. The principal characters should be ordinary men of the world to the exclusion of divine beings.

valkala

Garment made of tree-bark, usually worn by hermits practising austerities.

varṇāśrama

A compound word formed of *varṇa+āśrama. Varṇa* (lit. colour) refers to the four classes into which Indian society was divided for apportionment of social duties; viz., Brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. Āsṛama refers to the four stages in the life of brāhmaṇas (also kṣatriyas and vaiśyas): (1) period of study of Vedas, Śāstras, Kalās (*brahmacarya*); (2) married life (*gṛhastha*); (3) retirement in the forest (*vānaprastha*); (4) renunciation (saṁnyāsa).

Vidūṣaka

Character in a play, who evokes laughter by all possible means: dress, make up, speech, gestures, movements and so on. Usually, boon companion of the hero.

Vidyādharas

See *devayoni*. The *Vidyādharas*, as their name indicates, are described as adepts in magical lore. (cf. Bhāsa's *Pañcarātra*).

Vipralambha-śṛṅgāra

See *Śṛṅgāra-rasa*.

Vīra (*rasa*)

One of the nine *rasas* of Indian Aesthetics. The basic emotion behind *vīra-rasa* is dynamic spirit (*utsāha*). The emotion that gets transformed into *rasa* in this case is an energetic state of mind, which may be called 'spirit' or 'dynamism', serving as the motive force for all great actions. Corresponding to the different actions, *Vīra-rasa* is classified as three or four by critics: (1) *Yuddha-vīra* (heroism in battle), (2) *Dāna-vīra* (heroism in giving away one's personal belongings), (3) *Dharma-vīra* (heroism in upholding *dharma*), (4) *Dayā-vīra* (heroism in showing compassion to persons in suffering.

vīra-svarga

Lit. 'hero's heaven', said of the heaven earned by a warrior, who dies fighting in the battle-field. According to Hindu mythology, any warrior who braves the enemy and dies a hero's death is rewarded immediately by being conducted straight to Heaven by celestial beauties, like *apsarases.*

Viṣkambhaka

One of the five kinds of Interludes in Sanskrit drama. The main object of the *Viṣkambhaka* (as of other interludes like *Praveśaka*) is to inform the audience of such elements of the story, which cannot be or are unfit to be represented on the stage, as part of the action. The speciality of the *Viṣkambhaka* (as opposed to the *Praveśaka*) lies in this that only higher and middle rank characters figure in it and it can be employed at the beginning of the opening Act too. When only middle rank characters figure in it, it is wholly in Sanskrit; otherwise, it is in mixed Sanskrit and Prakrit.

Viśvajit

A sacrifice, in which a person gives up all his wealth (including his belongings) as *dakṣiṇā* (*q.v.*) to the priests conducting it.

Vīthī

One of the ten major types of drama in Sanskrit. See *Nāṭaka*. *Vīthī* is an one-Act play, unique in every way. All the (eight) sentiments recognised by Bharata for the stage have a place in it. The characters are drawn from all levels, high, middle and low. It can be with a single character or with many characters. Its thirteen ancillaries described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (which are specialities of dialogue-structure) have a function in all the other nine major forms of drama also.

Vyāyoga

One of the ten major types of drama in Sanskrit. See *Nāṭaka. Vyāyoga* is an one-Act play, with a vigorous theme and with very few women on the cast. Battles, single-combats, rivalries etc. constitute the plot-tissue. Like the *Samavakāra*, the heroes and villains in this play number twelve. The heroes are drawn from well known epic-stories, but they should not be divine beings or great kings. All the vigorous sentiments have a place in the *Vyāyoga*, which is thus fundamentally a manly play.

yajamāna

The person who performs the sacrifice, takes the *dīkṣā* (resolve) for the sacrifice, pays all its expenses and to whom goes the ultimate fruit or reward of the sacrifice. It is he who invites and appoints all the priests, who conduct the sacrificial rituals.

yajña

A vedic sacrifice, which is defined as the giving away of prescribed offerings to specified deities, in accordance with the injunctions given in the Veda, for a specific purpose.

Yamaka

A *śabdālaṅkāra* (see *Alaṅkāra*) in which a collocation of syllables (involving consonants and vowels) is repeated in the same order and in fixed parts of the verse.

Yuddha-vīra

See *Vīra* (*rasa*). The basic emotion behind *Yuddha-vīra* is the most common form of the heroic spirit, the spirit to fight a powerful enemy in battle.

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Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa, Trivandrum, 1912; T.S.S. No. 16 with four Appendices, of which two are special features:

App. I, मन्त्राङ्कव्याख्यानम्, being the editor's Sanskrit commentary, attempting to decode the secret code-language dialogues of Act III; App. II giving the variant readings of a Ms. procured later.

Pañcarātra, Trivandrum, 1912; T.S.S. No. 17

Avimāraka, Trivandrum, 1912; T.S.S. No. 20

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*Dr. Sastri's editions of the thirteen plays are all critical editions based on the then available Mss. for each play and provide a faithful record of the variant readings along with the particulars of the *apparatus criticus.* The editor has, besides, added foot-notes in Sanskrit of textual and exegetical importance, wherever necessary. All these conform to a set pattern and generally contain a Sanskrit Introduction called *Nivedanā*, its English version called 'Preface' and the 'cast' of the play, captioned 'Pātrāṇi' in the beginning and an Index of verses at the end, called श्लोकानुक्रमणी. *Svapnavāsavadatta*, published first, has a long Introduction in English (47 pp.) and in Sanskrit (43 pp.) besides the usual bilingual Preface and also a separate Appendix at the end, recording the variants and restorations of lacunae from subsequently secured Mss. Likewise, *Pratimā*, published last, has also similar Introductions in English (41 pp.) and Sanskrit (32 pp.), in which the editor has buttressed his case of Bhāsa-authoriship with further arguments and also attempted to meet the counter-arguments of scholars who refuted the Bhāsa-authorship hypothesis.

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* The book, which could not be utilised for the present monograph completed in 1979, contains interesting information hitherto not well known outside Kerala about staging of Sanskrit plays on the indigenous Kerala stage. Dr. Unni has also compiled and presented an exhaustive survey of all available Ms. material on the thirteen plays. One Ms. of *Avimāraka* is noticed by Dr. Unni to have an additional verse at the end, which probably mentions a certain Kātyāyana (?) as the author (?). The mutilated line reads का × यनेन लिखितं and Dr. Unni fills up the lacuna with त्या, restores it as Kātyāyana and identifies him with the grammarian Vararuci, who is believed to be identical with the author of one of the *bhāṇas* in the well known *Caturbhāṇī*. Dr. Unni questions the ascription of *Avimāraka* to Bhāsa on the stength of this verse. He is, moreover, disposed to accept only *Svapnavāsavadatta* and *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* as genuine Bhāsa-plays and pleads for further research to decide the case of the other plays. However, the wisdom of this attribution of this solitary play of the group to Kātyāyana on the strength of a lone MS. removed from his times by many centuries and the question of his age and identity need further अनिरीक्षा !

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I have received considerable help from the libraries of Scindia Oriental Institute, Ujjain, Mythic Society, Bangalore, Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore and the Adyar Library and Research Centre, Madras in the compilation of this Bibliography. I have also utilised the Bibliography appended to Dr. Pusalker's book and the Bibliography of English translations of Sanskrit Dramas by Dr. V. Raghavan, published in *Indian Literature*, III. I. and reproduced in the *Samskrita Ranga Annual*, II (1959-60). In the latter case, I had to content myself with reproducing the details available in the sources, even if they were incomplete.

—The author

Index

ab duct/ed/-tion, 35, 37, 59, 61, 64
Abhijnānasākuntala, 93 (see Śakuntala)
Abhimanyu, 29, 71, 76, 78–80, 101
Abhinavabhāratī, 116
Abhinavagupta, 7, 9, 16
Abhiṣeka (= coronation) 28, 58
Abhiṣeka/Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka, 12, 28 31–45, 62, 106, 114; authenticity doubtful 39 ; average merit 45; best scene 36; characters, intermingling of human and divine 42; coronation in Laṅkā, ill-conceived 42; defects minor (cheap sound effects, weak defence of Rāma's killing Vālin) 43; devoid of inventive flashes 106; early play of great dramatist 45; immaturities 45; Kerala origin 39; merits distinctive (dialogue, *patākāsthānaka*, Sophoclean irony) 43–45, Rāma portrayed as divine incarnation 28, 29, 41; Rāma's divinity, distinguishing feature 41; supernatural, intrusion of-chief shortcoming 42
abridging, 35
abrupt/-ly, 34, 35, 73, 85
accents, 19
accident/al, 40, 106 (see Chance)
action/s, 34, 38, 41, 42, 43, 51, 67, 68, 78, 93, 101, 106 (see under dramatic)
actor/s, 7, 12, 21
adaptation, 100, 114
adbhuta, 67, 94; —rasa, 82
Aeschylus, 3
aesthetes, 88 (see also connoisseur)
aesthetic, 68, 100, 111; appreciation 68; sensibility/-ies, 3, 16, 100; sensitivity, 100
Agastya-gotra, 18
Agni, 40, 41
Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 73
Aja, 52, 56
ajāgalastana, 93
Ajanta, 16
Akṣa, 38
alaṅkāra's, 109 (see embellishments, figure of speech, ornament)
Alexander Pope, 115
Alexander the Great, 43
Aligarh, 9
allegorical, 69, 114
All India Oriental Conference, 97
alliteration/-tive, 16, 43, 107
allusions, 19, 26, 31
Amaruka, 5
American, 22
amṛta, 76
amuse/-ing/-ment, 74, 75, 90, 105
anachronism, 43
Anagnorisis, Greek, 92
anagram, 16
Ānandavardhana, 5, 22, 109, 115
ancient/s, 1, 3, 12, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 42, 88, 107
Aṅgada, 36
Anhilwad, 7
anthology/-ies/-ist, 4, 10, 88, 95, 96
anticlimax, 46
anuprāsa, 16, 106 (see alliteration)

anuṣṭubh, 45
apparation, 91
Appayadīkṣita, 110
appeal 80; didactic 70; dramatic, 88; grounding 100; juvenile, 81
appreciate/-tion, 20, 86, aesthetic, 68
appropriateness, 39, 100
Apsarases, 36
apt/-ly/-ness, 19, 99, 116
Araṇyakāṇḍa, 33, 35
archaeologist, 22
archaic, 115
archaisms, 11, 97
arch-conspirator, 86; arch-knave, 78
Ardhanārīśvara, 19, 27, 109
Ariṣṭarsabha, 81
Aristophanes, 4
Aristotle, 106
Arjuna, 69, 71, 77, 79, 80, 101, 107; elevation of, 79
arjuna (tree), 81
art/s (Art), 1, 2, 3, 16, 20, 35, 51, 62–64, 94, 98–100, 107, 108, 110, 115, 116, consummate, 79; economy in 77; 93; expression of universal sensibility, 16; for Art's sake, 20; great 16, 20, 77, 101; perfect, 94; pure, 21; spontaneous, 100, - treasures, 16 (see under dramatic, literary, poetic)
Arthaśāstra, 9, 23, 24; of Bṛhaspati, 25
artificial/-ly/-ities, 9, 60, 69, 80, 84, 89, 92, 107
artist/ry, 44, 49
artistic/-ally, 39, 49, 64, 76, 95, 107 ease, 74; economy, 101; unity, 67; values, 85; sensibilities, 20, 22
Aruṇi, 92, 100
Āryabhaṭa, 17
Āryaka, 85
Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi, 12
aśoka, 47; *-vanika*, 37, 113
āśrama, 58, 114
astras, 69
Astrology/-gically, 17, 55
Astronomy, 17
asuras, 37, 81
Aśvaghoṣa, 114
Aśvatthāman, 77
atmosphere, 39, 77, 82, 84
attitude, strikes new, 92
aucitya, 50 (see adaptation, aptness, becoming, proper)
audience, 1, 17, 25, 37, 42, 45, 51, 53, 57, 61, 64, 74, 80, 86, 90, 91, 93
author/-ship, 10–13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 22, 25, 85, 95, 112; common, 10–12
autobiography, 17
Avadātikā, 47, 48, 49, 101
Avanti, 91
Avantikā, 92
Avantisundari, 91
Avantisundarīkathā, 7
Avimāraka (hero), 83, 103
Avimāraka (drama), 19, 25, 28, 30, 31, 42, 83–84, 96, 101, 105, 106, 108, 109
  Bhāsa's dramatic insight, 84; *denouement* forced, 106; *deus ex machina*, 84; melo-dramatic touch, 106; midnight scene, 84; romantic love, 30, 83; *Romeo and Juliet* of Bhāsa, 30; supernatural minimal, 42; social milieu of Bhāsa's India, 84
Ayyar, A.S.P., 15, 24, 26, 31, 88, 96, 97
Ayodhyā, 12, 34, 42, 51, 53–55, 57, 59, 61, 62

background, 38, 64, 69–72, 92, 99; -effect, 69
bahubhūmikaih, 21, 81
Bālacarita, 19–20, 28, 29, 31, 41, 81, 96, 106, 114
  answers Bāṇa's description, 81; designed for children, 82;

characters large number of 81; divinity conspicuous, 41; language highly simple, 81; overdose of supernatural, 106; plot full of kṛṣṇa's miracles, 41, 81; different from *Mahābhārata* and Purāṇas, 30
Bālakāṇḍa, 33, 35
Bālāki, 51, 52
Balarāma, 20, 76, 99
Baldness (name of character), 82
Bāṇa, 9, 10, 22, 81
banter, 61, 74, 84 (see light exchanges)
battle/s-field, 13, 23, 39, 66, 67, 73, 75, 107
beauty/-ies, 9, 14, 16, 19, 22, 35, 39, 40, 43, 46, 48, 62, 79, 86, 91, 92, 95, 98–100, 102, 103, 110–111, 116; suggestive, 79; supernal, 93; quality of soul, 93
beautiful/ly, 9, 22, 27, 44, 47, 48, 68, 71, 102, 109, 111, 114
becoming (= proper to) 103 (cf. aucitya)
Belvalkar, Dr. S.K., 13
benedictory (prayer/verse), 19, 35, 45, 62, 69, 85, 95 (see Nāndi)
betroth/-als, 86, 89
Bhagavadgītā, 107
Bhagavatapurāṇa, 30
Bhagīratha, 33
Bhāmaha, 9
Bhāṇa, 6
Bharata (author of *Nāṭyaśāstra*), 27
Bharata (son of Daśaratha), 34, 41, 42, 49, 53–58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 108
bharatavākaya/s, 10, 26, 31, 41, 73, 85; subtle differences in 31
Bhāravi, 114
Bhartṛhari, 4
Bhāsa-A Study, 14; most authoritative book on Bhāsa, 14
Bhat, Dr. G.K., 21, 75
Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa, 64, 113
Bhavabhūti, 2, 4, 6, 93, 95, 107, 113, 114
bhayānaka (rasa), 67, 82, 94
bhikṣā, 69
Bhīma, 29, 64, 73–77, 78, 79, 80, 101
Bhīṣma, 68, 78–80
Bhoja, 7, 9, 33, 50, 62
biography, 17
Black Night (name of character), 82
blemishes, 106 (see defects)
blending (sentiments), 104
blessing/s, 3, 71, 74
boon/s, 20, 71, 74
Boswell, 16
Bradley, 44, 75
Brahmā, 19, 103
Brahmacārin, 89, 93
brahman/brāhmaṇa/s, 21, 25, 29, 31, 55, 69, 70, 73, 74, 78, 85, 89, 92, 99, 108; burglar, 84, 85; depravity of, 84; -guru, 77; -priests, 78; spirit, 74
Brahmarṣis, 20
Brahmāstra, 40
Bṛhannalā, 79
Bṛhaspati, 25
Bṛhatkathā, 30, 83
Buddha, 25, 26
Buddhacarita, 114
Buddism, 25
Buddist-monks, 25, 86; texts, 9
burglar/y, 25, 31, 83, 85; -tool, 84

cakra, 41
Cākyār/s, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21; Nīlakaṇṭha-Cākyār, 12
Cākyār-nāṭaka-cakra, 14
Campū-Rāmāyaṇa, 62
C•ṇakya, 26, 114
Caṇḍāla, 81, 84
Candragupta II, 23
Candragupta Maurya, 24
Cāṇūra, 81
captive, 79, 87, 102
captor, 79
capture/-es/ed, 22, 79, 83, 87, 93, 102, 108

caricature, 53
Cārudatta (hero) 30, 84, 85
Cārudatta (drama), 20, 25, 28, 30, 31, 42, 83, 84, 85, 105, 106, 108, 114; controversies about, 85; present form unfinished (fragmentary), 31, 32, 85; Bhāsa's genius for humour at its best, 84; incompleteness not due to dramatist's death, 32; supernatural totally eliminated, 42; technique of weaving sub-plot, 30–31; truncated plot, 106; unique in many respects, 84–85
cast, 69, 77, 81, 85, (see female, human, male)
cattle-raid, 77–79
Challenge/s, 45, 73, 85
Chamberlain, 51, 102
'Chance', 64, 105; -element, 92; (see accidental, coincidence, fortuitous)
change/s, 14, 34, 37, 54, 58, 62, 68, 86 (see deviation)
character/s, 10, 11, 29, 31, 41, 42, 45, 58, 59, 62, 64, 66, 67, 70, 73, 75, 80, 84, 93, 94, 98, 100, 101, 106, 110, 114; complete metamorphosis of 76; divine female, 81, 114; huge number of 81; living, 5; male, 81; names of major, 45, 58; revolutionary change of Kaikeyi's, 62; universal, 84
characterisation, 34, 43, 54, 57, 65, 68, 69, 92
charm/-ing, 22, 87, 93, 99, 110
child-hood, 30; -killer, 71; taste, 82
children's *fete*, 82
Chinese, 4
chronicles, 27
citra (alaṅkāra), 16
city, 84; -scoundrels, 84
clash/es, 39, 100
Classic, 88
classical, 2, 12, 15, 112
Cleopatra, 93
Climactic point, 90
Climax, 5, 46, 50, 79, 87, 102
Cloak, assumed, 92
Closet-play, 69, 86
Clowns, 84
Code language, 86
Coincidence, 6, 105 (see chance)
Collapses, 57 (see faint)
Comedy of errors, 74
Comic, 101, 105;
  relief, 53, 61; sentiment, 74
Common author/-ship of plays, 10, 11, 12
Compare, 3, 62, 108
Comparison, 5, 10, 64, 65, 100, 108, 113
Condensation, 44 (see abridging)
Conflict/-ing, 5, 36, 89, 92, 94
Connoisseur/s, 1, 4, 88, 111, 116 (see also aesthete, sahṛdaya, *vidagdha*)
Conspire/-racy, 72, 86
Conspirator, 86
Contrary, 71, 77
Contrast/-ed, 9, 34, 71, 80, 85, 98, 102
Controversy/-ies, 8, 11, 13–15, 78, 85, 95, 96
Conundrum, 16
Convention/al, 17, 18, 42, 43, 46, 64, 78
Conversation, 17, 37, 52, 53, 57, 100; triangular, 78, 86
Coronation, 28, 33, 39, 41, 42, 46, 47–48, 51, 57, 61, 62, 100
Costumes, 47, 49, 50
Court-poet, 12, 18
Creative, 6, 7, 31, 42, 98, 113
creation/s, 12–13, 16, 17, 20, 27, 29, 75, 78, 84, 89, 102, 113, 115
critic/s, 5, 6, 7, 15, 17, 32, 33, 43, 65, 85, 88, 94, 98, 100, 105, 111, 113
Critical, 6, 9, 13, 51, 94, 95, 100
Criticism, 9, 36, 101, 105, 113
Culture, 62, 78
Cultural, 14, history, 3

Curtain, 42, 62; side-curtain, 92
Curse/s, 3, 20, 30, 57, 60, 69, 77, 81, 82, 105

dakṣiṇā, 55
Dakṣiṇāvartanātha, 113
Dāmaka-Prahasana, 12
dānavīra, 67
dance/s, 27, 79, 81
Dandekar, Dr. R.N., 96
Daṇḍin, 7, 9, 115
darbha, 24
Daridra-Cārudatta, 85, 114
Darśaka, 12
Daśaratha, 41, 42, 46, 51–53, 54, 55, 58, 60, 62, 63, 101, 107, 108
Daśarūpaka, 98
De, Dr. (S.K.), 52
dead/-ly, 20, 55, 56, 59, 63, 81–82, 86, 87, 89, 94, 115
Death/death, 11, 28, 36, 40, 52, 54–56, 75–78, 103, 104, 107; -deed, 89; -scene, 75
Decimal place system, 17
decoration/s, 47, 55, 109, 113
defect/s, 43, 64, 106, 115 (see blemish, defiency, fault, lacuna, lapse)
deficiency/-ies, 115
demi-gods, 20
demon/s/-ess, 29, 76, 81
denouement, 5 65, 87, 106
departure/s (see deviation), 27, 29, 51; -from original, 42, 77; unique, 78; major, 80
describe/d, description/s, 10, 19, 38, 40, 46, 59, 72, 75, 76, 78, 79, 81, 85, 95, 99, 108–110
descriptive, 38
Desdemona, 92
design/s, 39, 65, 92; grandeur of, 55, 90; novel, 64; plot-design, 73
despair, desperate, 39, 76, 83
deus ex machina, 43, 84
Devadhar, Dr. C.R., 13
devakārya, 40
Devakulika, 55
devayoni, 20
Devanāgarī, 28
Devī, 19; -upāsanā, 19
deviation, 35, 70 (see change, departure, innovation, invention, transformed, twist, variation)
device/s, 1, 43, 45, 92, 94; artificial, 69
Dhanañjaya, 98
Dhanapāla, 83
Dharma, 55, 64; -sástra, 17, -vīra, 64, 67
Dhenuka, 81
Dhīran•ga, 113
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, 29, 67, 68, 71–73, 75, 77
Dhruva, Prof. K.H., 13, 63
dhvani, 22, 101 (see hint, over-tones, suggest)
dialect, 54, 86
dialogue/s, 5, 20, 31, 37, 44, 45, 49, 59, 90, 91, 100, 101, 106; boxing (in single verse), 54; fantastic, 90, 100, 101; intricate, 86; mastery of 77; solo, 87; wit of, 5
dialogue-test, 31
didactic-appeal, 70; tone, 70
die, dying, 20, 40, 60, 107, 108
Dikshitar, Dr. V.R.R., 13
Dilipa, 52, 56
Diṅnāga, 113
director, 21
disguise/-ed/-es, 3, 14, 25, 29, 58, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85, 86, 89, 92, 93, 101, 105, 109, 110, 114; -motif, 92, 101
divine/s, 20, 34, 36, 40, 41, 42, 55, 101, 115; missile/s, 69; weapon/s, 41; semi-divine, 20
divinity, 19, 36, 41, 65
dominant-figure, 63; sentiment, 64
drama/s, 1, 3–6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 35, 36, 41, 42, 44, 48, 64, 66, 70, 80, 84, 88, 89, 91–98, 100, 101, 105, 106, 112–116

adverse effect of supernatural on, 42; basic principle of, 27; characteristics of good, 5; crown of 94; emotions, soul of 5, 102; essence of, 27; great masters of 44; Greek, inter-mingling of human and divine characters in, 42; human actions primary concern of 42; manly, 85; of love, 88; sensational, 91; types of 5, 27; within drama, 91; world, 5, 93, 105

dramatic, 34, 47
  action, 34, 41, 43, 93; appeal, 88; art, 1, 92, 100, 107, 116; cast, 77; devices, 92; deviations, 70; dialogue/s, 100, 106; effect, 27, 89, 101; element, 106; episode, 46; excellence, 5; expertise, 6; form, 29; genius/es, 13, 62, 90; insight, 56, 64, 71, 84, 106; irony, 44, 53, 71, 74, 78, 89, 92, 93, 114; justification, 55, literature, 52; monologue, 6; performances, 21; plausibility, 106; power, 92, presentation, 6; production, 21; purpose/s, 34, 42, 55, 66, 101; qualities, 5; revelation, 60; scenes, 52, 89; situation/s 11, 77, 78 ; start, 65; technique, 11, 30, 61, 64, 100; tempo, 5; tissue, 93; types, 42; vision, 100, writer, 1

dramatis personae, 10, 11

dramatise/s/-ed/ing, 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 54, 67, 96

dramatist/s, 1–4, 6, 7, 19, 25, 27, 31–33, 35, 43, 45, 46–48, 53, 54, 57, 63, 64, 69, 72, 75, 76, 82, 84, 88, 92, 98-100, 106, 107, 110, 113–116; born, 94; craft of 45;-'s creative activity, 31; great, 100, 106, 114; Greek 3; immaturity of, 35; Indian, 3, 9; later, 17, 85; of promise 43; of the world, 27; -'s skill, 68

dramaturgic/al-design, 50, 63; objective, 63; motive, 49, 54; purpose, 47; texts, 73

dramaturgy, 95, 96; Indian, 27, 42, 44

Draupdī, 68, 76

dream/s/-ing, 60, 90, 91, 92, 114; dreamer, 93 -land, 91; talking in 90–91; -vision, 91; -world, 90

dream-scene, 89–91, 92–94; design of 90; disguise, irony, chance, suspense, conflict-all rolled in one in 92; emotional power of Vāsavadattā in, 94; high drama of 90; highlight of *Svapnavāsavadatta*, 92 ; serious lacuna in, 106; outcome of accident, 106; technique of, 92; a *tour-de-force*, 92; unparalleled creation of Bhāsa's genius, 89–90

dreamy vision, 91

drink, 87; euology of, 87; glory of, 95–96

drinking bouts, 85

Droṇa, 78–80

Dṛśya-kāvya, 98

drunkard, 87; -scene, 100

Durjaya, 80

Durvāsa, 105

Duryodhana, 29, 30, 67–69, 71, 72, 73, 75–80, 101, 104, 114; elevation of character, 75, 78; facets of greatness 76; greatness in fall, 75

Dūṣaṇa, 35

dust, 79, 108, 110, 111

Duśśalā, 71

Duśśāsana, 68

Duṣyanta, 105

Dūtaghaṭotkaca, 28, 29, 31, 66, 67, 71–73, 78
  theme, creation of Bhāsa, 29, 71; Duśśalā, lever to heighten pathos, 71; irony, touching, 71; sarcasm and satire, 72; patch-work, 73

dūta-kāvyas, 112

Dūtavākya, 10, 28, 29, 31, 41, 66–69,

77–78 characterisation, powerful, 69; devoid of inventive flashes, 106; divinity conspicuous, 41; immature hand, marks of, 69; miracles in, 41; no departure from *Mahābhārata*, 29; painting-scroll motif, crown of, 68; supernatural, 69; verses, highest-percentage of, 69

early-lier (play), 31, 71
eavesdroppers, 89
economy, 93, 101, 77
ecstacy/-tic, 19, 39, 93
elephant, 38, 83, 101, 103, 108, 109, 112, 114
elevate/d/-ting/-tion, 29, 34, 50, 60, 75, 76, 78, 79
elite, 100
Ellora, 16
elope/-ing/-ments, 30, 86, 104
embassy, 29, 71
embellishments, 94, 109
emotion/s/-al, 5, 13, 27, 52–54, 67, 75, 92, 94, 98, 101, 109; -packed, 78
enactment, 46
English, 4, 10, 24
epic/s, 18, 27, 29, 33, 34, 35, 49, 66–68, 71, 75, 78, 80, 100, 107, 108, 112; -poet, 6; -repetition, 107
epicurean, 89
epigraphist, 22
episode/s, 29, 30, 34, 41, 47, 48, 51, 60, 67, 74, 91; elephant, 101; pratImagṛha, 54, 108; valkala, 47–50, 64, 101; viracikā, 91; vulgar, 68 (see also incident)
epos, 33
equivocation, 53
espionage, 85
ethical, 70
eunuch, 77
Euripides, 4
excess/es, 94, 106, 109
exchange/s/-ed, 40, 43, 49, 51, 53, 59, 61, 68, 71, 74, 79, 90, 91; light, 86 (see banter)
experiment, 30, 69, 73

fabric, 27, 116
fabricate/d/-tion, 97
faint, 40, 51, 52, 63 (see collapse, reel)
fairyland, 82, 91
fall/en, 36, 45, 75–76, 102
fancy/-ciful, 39, 48, 104, 109, 110
farce, 95
Fate/s, fate/-ful, 51, 60, 89, 102, 106
fatal, 36, 59, 77
faults, 115 (see defects); -less, 115
fear/s, 37, 48, 52, 94, 104
feeling/s, 22, 36, 39, 42, 52, 60, 77, 89, 90, 93, 98, 103
female, 69, 81, 82, 85
feminine, 47, 50, 71, 89, 103
fiction-plays, 28
fight/s/-ing/-ers, 40, 42, 45, 59, 64, 73, 74–76, 81, 107; (see mace-fight)
figure/s (of speech), 100, 103, 104, 109–110 (see *alaṅkāra*)
fire, 11, 88, 89; -ordeal, 11, 40, 88, 94; fiery, 85
flaw, 65
foil, 69 (see also set off)
folk dances, 81
folk-lore, 30, 82
forger/y, 18, 96
foreshadow/s/-ing, 5, 39, 44, 51, 86, 105, 110; (see also oblique hint)
foretaste, 52, 69, 84
forte, 74
fortuitous/ly, 16, 55, 64
fragment/ed/-ary, 83, 85, 106, 114
fun, 47, 48, 54
fun and frolic, 53
fusion of sentiments, 74

gadā, 41, 104; -*yuddha*, 75
Ganapati Sastri, Mahāmahopādhyāya T (& Dr. Sastri), 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 19, 24, 25, 64, 70, 96, 113, 114, 115
Gāndhārī, 71
Gandharvas, 20, 41
Ganeśa, 19
Gaṅgā, 33, 36, 57, 58
Gaṅgāvataraṇa, 112
Garuḍa, 68, 69, 81
genius/es, 2, 5, 22, 29, 38, 42, 43, 62, 67, 99, 113, 115 (see under dramatic); evil, 78; literary, 5; nascent, 2; mellow, 42, 85
genre/s, 69, 112, 114
geography/-ical, 21
Ghoṣavatī, 92
ghost, 82
Ghṛtapiṇḍa, 79
god/s, God/-head/Goddess, 20, 27, 28, 34, 41–43, 55, 76, 102; -given, 90
Gograhaṇa, 30
Gomitra, 79
Gorakṣaṇikā, 79
Gordian knot, 43
grammatical-archaisms, 97; irregularities, 31; solecisms, 11–13
grand style, 77
grave-diggers-scene, 53
greatness, 1, 36, 40, 59, 75, 76, 78, 88, 101, 112, 114; of drama/ dramatist, touchstone of, 6, 114
Greek/s, 3, 92; drama, 3, 42; dramatists, 3; stage, 3; theatre, 3, 43
green room, 47, 48, 50
grief, 36, 60
grim, 49, 102
ground, 48, 59, 68, 75, 76, 78, 79, 89, 90, 95, 101, 108, 109 (see background)
groundlings, 100, 106; grounding-appeal/-orientation, 100
Gujarat, 7, 28
Guṇāḍhya, 83
Gupta, 23, 24
gurudakṣiṇa, 78

Hamlet, 36, 53
haṁsas, 36
hand-cuffs, 85
Hanumān, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 72
Haraprasad Sastri, Mahāmahopādhyāya, 13
harem, 77, 79, 92, 105
Harivaṁśa, 30
Harṣa, 4, 6 (see also Śrī-Harṣa)
Harṣa Vikramāditya, 18
Hastināpura, 80
hāsya, 67, 74; -rasa, 101, 105
heart/s, 5, 17, 39, 40, 46, 50, 53, 54, 58, 60, 72, 75, 76, 89, 95, 98, 99, 103; -less, 72; hearty, 90; -rending, 49, 54, 77, 86, 95
heaven/ly, 36, 41, 42, 60, 87, 99, 107
height/s/-en, 49, 69, 71, 89, 116
hero/es, 19, 29, 30, 36, 40, 41, 63, 73, 74, 76, 83, 84, 86, 89, 91, 92, 93, 95, 104, 109, 120; -worship, 115 (see also tragic hero)
heroic/-al/-ally, 23, 64, 70–72, 104; sentiment, 74, 104; feeling, facets of, 67
heroine, 19, 83, 84, 91, 93, 95, 109
heroism, 67, 69, 105
Hidimbā, 29, 73, 74
Himālaya/s, 21, 22, 58, 65, 66
himavad-vindhya-kuṇḍalā, 22
Himavān, 58, 65, 66
Hindi, 112
Hindu/ism, 19–20, 52
hint, 39, 46, 48 (cf. foreshadow, *dhvani*)
historical, 4, 12, 17, 21, 22, 26, 29; plays 85–95 (see also quasi-historical)
historicity, 85

historiography, 6
history, 2, 4, 17, 18, 21, 22, 26–29; (see also cultural, literary)
histrionic, 21
home/-land, 1, 6, 7, 21, 22
Horatiô, 36
Hudson, W.H., 101
human/s, 5, 20, 34, 41, 42, 55, 58, 64, 68, 74, 82, 93, 100, 114; cost, 114; devil, 54; interest, 42, 93
humanise, 69
humorous/-rists, 84, 105, 114
humour, 61, 78, 84, 93, 101, 105, 114; all forms of 105; grim 49, 67; organic, 93
hunting, 60, 85, 89

identity, 11, 55, 56, 74, 79, 84, 92; revelation of, 84
idol/s, 14, 20, 55; -worship, 20
Īhāmṛga, 6
Ilaṅkovaḍigal, 7
Ikṣvāku, 51, 55, 57, 60
illusion, 48, 58, 63
image/s, 2, 19, 39, 48, 52, 55, 99, 100, 114, 116
imagery, 11, 19, 31, 39, 76, 99
imagination, 14, 29, 55
imitate/-tion/tors, 97, 112–114
immature/-rity, 31, 35, 65, 69, 106
implication/s, 50, 59, 60
impropriety/-ies, 43, 109
inartistic, 109
incarnate, 38
incarnation/s, 19, 29, 41
incident/s, 34, 41, 47, 49, 67, 93, 94, 106, 110
incognito, 77–79
India/Indian, 1–5, 6–9, 16, 17, 21, 22, 26, 27, 36, 42, 44, 50, 62, 84, 88, 97, 116
indoor games, 89
Indra, 20, 29, 37, 40, 41, 42, 45, 70, 76
Indrajit, 38, 40
influence/s, 21, 62, 112, 113, 114
inhuman, 50
innovation/s, 29, 34, 50 (see deviation)
innuendo, 87
inscription/s, 22, 107
insight, 100 (see dramatic, psychological)
inspiration, 1, 107, 108, 112, 115
inspire/d/-ing, 1, 22, 73, 76, 83, 112, 115
intelligence-ring, 86
interlude, 37, 38, 39, 40, 52, 57, 58, 61, 79, 89, 114
interpretation, 19, 21, 70, 81, 96
invent/-ed/-ing/-tion, 47, 49, 54, 55, 62, 63, 66, 73
inventive-flashes, 93, 106; genius, 29, 34; skill, 47, 70
ironic, 90, 105
irony, 47, 53, 71, 101, 114; and hāsyarasa, 101; and karuṇarasa, 101; and multiple effect, 101; at emotional heights, 101; Bhāsa's forte, 74; of situation, 71, 92, 93, 102, 114; poignant, 54; prophetic, 45, 47; sophoclean, 44, 78; tragic, 91, 101; verbal, 74, 92; with undercurrent of pathos, 89; (see also dramatic irony)

Jacobi, Dr. Hermann, 13
Jain(a) Digambara, 25; monk/s, 25, 26
Jainism, 26
Jaipur, 96
Jalhaṇa, 88
Janasthāna, 34, 58, 59, 61, 65
Jaṭāyu, 59
Java, 112
Jayadeva, 95, 114
Jayadratha, 71
Jayaswal, Dr. K.P. 13
jester, 86, 91, 93, 99, 104 (see Vidūṣaka)

Jhala, Prof. J.C., 96
jingles, 16; verbal, 69
Jivasiddhi, 26
joke/s, 25, 47, 89
jovial, 89
justice, 113 (see Poetic Justice)
justify/-fication, 64, 79, 93
juxtaposition, 40 (see *patākāsthānaka*)

Kabandha, 35
Kaikeyi, 28, 34, 47, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 108; purity of 62; Vālmīki's portrayal of, 62
Kailāsa, 76
Kālidāsa/'s, 1–3, 5–7, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 27, 93, 95, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109; 112–115; date of 23; impact on Indian theatre, 2; -inscription, 97
Kāliya, 81
Kalpasūtra, 18
Kamban, 76
Kaṁsa, 20, 30, 81
Kanauj, 7
Kāñcanapārśva, 58
Kāñcī, 12
Kane, MM Dr. P.V., 13
Kaṇva, 105
Karṇa/'s, 20, 29, 69–70, 78, 107
Karṇabhāra, 20, 28, 29, 31, 41, 66, 69–70, 107; devoid of inventive flashes, 106; divine characters 41; divinity conspicuous, 41; immature, 70; minor variations, 70; no female roles 69; probably incomplete, 70; shortest play, 69
Kārtyāyanī, 19, 81
Kashmir, 7
Karuṇa, 64, 67, 94; -rasa, 101
K•ēī, 12
Kaṭhopaniṣad, 108
Kaurava/s, 29, 69, 71, 72, 78–80, 110
Kausalyā, 51, 57, 107
Kauṭilya, 9, 23, 24, 26
Kavaca-kuṇḍala, 20, 69, 70
Kavi (see Rāmakṛṣṇa)
Kavi, 66, 98
Kaviputra, 2, 23
Kāvya, 1, 96, 98, 115
Kāvyam*imaṁsā*, 1
Keats, 111
Keeper (of statue house), 55–56
Keith, Dr. A.B., 13–14, 34, 62, 69, 96
Kerala/Keralite, 10, 14, 12, 13, 15, 21, 28, 39; authors, 11, 12; manuscripts, 11, 12; -nāṭaka-cakra, 14; stage, 12
Keśavamiśra, 8
Keśin, 81
Khaṇḍalāvya, 95
Khara, 25
Kicaka, 78
Kidnapper/kidnappings, 80, 85
Kill/ed/-er, killing/s, 29, 30, 35, 39, 40, 71–72, 78, 81, 85; child-killer, 71
King/-dom/-ship, 10, 12, 29, 35, 42, 46, 49, 51, 53, 54, 55–58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 67, 68, 77–80, 86, 87, 88, 90–92, 99, 101, 102, 104, 109, 110, 113, 114
Kiraṇāvatī, 18
Kirātārjunīya, 114
Kiṣkindhā, 35, 37, 38, 59
Kiṣkindhā-Kāṇḍa, 33
Koṅark, 16
Koṇkaṇa
Konow, Dr. Sten, 13
Kośāmbi, 12
Krauñca, 36, 65
Kṛpa, 78
Kṛṣṇa, 20, 29, 30, 68–70, 72, 73, 81, 96, 103; 'Kṛṣṇa-eyes' 72; legend, 19, 28; -legend plays, 28, 66, 81
Kṛṣṇamisra, 114
Ksatriyas, 20, 55

Kubera, 41
Kulapatî, 58
Kulsekharavarman, 12
Kumārasambhava, 114
Kuṇḍodara, 82
Kunhan Raja, Dr. C., 13
Kuntaka, 110
Kuntī, 73, 76
Kuntibhoja, 12
Kuppuswami Sastri, Prof. S., 13, 14
Kuraṅgī, 30, 83
Kurukṣetra, 29, 66

lacuna, 106
Lakṣmaṇa, 35, 38, 39, 40, 46, 47, 49–50, 52, 56–59, 61, 63, 101
Lakṣmī, 41, 81, 103
language/s, 1, 8, 11, 22, 65, 71, 74, 81, 101, 105, 112, 116; code language, 86
Laṅkā, 28, 29, 35, 37–39, 40, 42
lapse/s, 36, 94, 114
lāsya, 27
legend/ary, 17, 28, 88; plays, 28, 83–85
Lévi, Dr. Sylvain, 13
light-interlude/revelry/vein, 89
literary, 3, 16, 18, 95, 98, 112; art 1; circles, 8; connoisseurs, 88; coteries, 11; creations, 17; criticism, 8, 101; critics, 9, 50; genius, 5; historian, 4; history, 4, 9, 18, 22; researches, 9; scene, Indian, 2; monuments, 17; studies, 9; taste, 8; thieves, 13; values, 9
literature, 6, 18, 19, 112, 114 (see under Sanskrit, Indian, World)
Long Sleep (name), 82
love/loving, 30, 31, 37, 47, 58, 75, 83–86, 88, 89, 101, 103, 113; -affairs, 87; as passion, 93; dedicated, 30; drama of 84, 88; in/of separation, 86, 103; in/of union, 86, 103; -making, 30; mature 93; Platonic, 84; plays, 103; -poets, 104; pure, 30, 93; romantic, 30, 85; self-denying, 30; spiritualised, 84; tender, 86, 94
lover/s, 30, 84, 87, 88, 91, 93, 95, 104, 110
ludicrous (humour), 105

Macbeth, 53, 86
mace-fight, 76
Machiavellian, 114
mad/-ness, 12, 87, 91; mad-cap, 87
Madanikā, 85
Madhūka, 81
madhyama (= middle), 29, 73
Madhyama (name), 29, 73, 74
Madhyamavyāyoga, 28, 29, 31, 66, 73–75, 103; dramatic irony in 74–75; early play, 31; introduction of Bhīma, artistic, 74; invented story, 66; new experiment, 73; plot modelled on Vedic story, 73; plot not related to *Mahābhārata* battle, 66, 73; two heroes, 73
Madurai, 12
Magadha, 88, 91
magic/al, 1, 22, 83, 113
Mahābhārata, 28–30, 66, 70, 73, 77, 106; -drama/s, -play/s, 19, 28, 30, 31, 66–81; -story, 29; theme, 29, 30, war, 29
mahakāvi, 5, 115
mahākāvya, 95
Mahānīla, 82
Mahāpadma Nanda, 26
Mahāsena, 86, 103
Maheśvara (writer of Yogaśāstra), 25
Mahiṣadatta, 79
Maitreya, 105
Malabar, 12
Mālatīmādhava, 114
Mālava, 7
Mālavi, 75
Malavikāgnimitra, 1, 23, 27

Malayalam, 9, 10, 12, 15, 39
mate, 77, 81, 89
Mānaviya (dharmaśāstra), 25
Mandodarī, 113
Maṅkha, 16
Manmatha, 114
Manojava, 82
Mantharā, 29, 46, 62
montras, 19, 55
Manu, 17
marriage, 79, 80, 88, 89
master/s/-y/-ly, 3, 16, 29, 30, 51, 64, 79, 102, 109, 112, 114; -mind, 86; piece 8, 101; -plan 87, -stroke, 49–50
Mātali, 40, 42
Mathematics, 17
Mattavilāsa-prahasana, 96
mature/rity, 31, 32, 64, 93, 106, 113; none-too-mature, 70
Maurya/n, 24, 26
māyā, 59, 65, 68, 114
Medhātithi, 25
Meerwarth (A.M.), 33, 85
Meghadūta, 112, 113
mellow/ing, 85, 93, 109, 113
melodrama/-tic, 74, 94, 106
melody/-ies, 19, 84
merit/s, 1, 43, 45, 93
Meru, 51
message, 29, 38, 55, 68, 72, 91, 101
messenger, 41, 68, 72, 110
metaphor/-ical, 2, 108
metrical endings, weak, 31
miracles, 60, 69, 81, 88
miraculous, 20, 30
missile/s, 69
monologue, 6
monosyllables, 101 (see silence)
mood, 22, 39, 58, 69, 92, 98, 109, 113, 115
Morpheus, 87
Mṛechakaṭika, 85, 114
motif/s, 11, 58, 84; disguise, 92; dream, 114; māyā, 114; painting-scroll, 68; picture, 68, 69; political, 84; verbal lapses, 114; wedding portrait, 87
Mudrālaṅkāra, 45
Mudrārākṣasa, 114
muse/muse-s, 16, 46, 50, 77, 106, 113, 115
music/al, 19, 84, 102, 115
Muṣṭika, 81
mystery/-ious, 8, 43, 46, 47, 72, 90, 91
mystic, 36, 58, 65, 69, 102
myth/mythology, 17, 52

Nāgānanda, 18, 64
Nagavana, 25
Nandagopa, 81
Nāndī, 20, 35, 95; -śloka, 20, 35, 95 (see benedictory)
Nandigrāma, 42
Nārada 19, 84, 93
Narasiṁhavarman, 12
Nārāyaṇa, 19, 38, 40, 41
narrate/-tion/-tive, 40, 56, 60, 63, 100
Nāṭaka, 6
nāṭaka-cakra, 4, 5
Nāṭika, 6
natural/-ness, 19, 41, 44, 48, 49, 55, 99, 113
Naṭya, 27; -dharmī, 42; -śastra, 46, 116
Nilakaṇṭha Cākyār, 12
Nilakaṇṭhadikṣita, 112, 115
novel/ty, 27, 29, 49, 58, 64, 78, 89, 100, 108
Nyāyaśāstra (of Medhātithi), 25

Oblations, 19, 78
Oblique, 26, 45; -hint, 48
Occident, 93, 110
Ominous, 45, 60, 69
One-Act plays, 29, 31, 66, 67, 75

Orient/-al/ists, 4, 8, 9, 13, 22, 97, 110; research, 8, 22
Original, 14, 21, 24, 26, 42, 47, 64, 66, 70, 71, 73, 77, 78, 110, 116
Ornament/s/-al/-ation, 38, 47, 48, 49, 51, 85, 90, 109, 110 (see also alaṅkāra)
Ornate prose, 106
Othello, 106
Over-ornamentation, 109
overtones, 59, 61, 73, 101, 103, 104

Padmāvatī, 88–90, 92, 99, 101, 102, 105
paint/-ed/-ing, 16, 54; -scroll, 68
Pālaka, 85
palindrome, 16
Pallava, 12
Pañcarātra, 20, 28, 31, 66, 77–81, 106, 108, 110, 114; balance between poetic and dramatic elements tilted, 106; character of Duryodhana noble/elevated, 67, 77–78; departure/s from original, 77, 78; dialogue, a fine piece of, 79; dramatic situations, 78; economy-sense, 77; innovation of five-day condition, 30, 78; only full length play on *Mahābhārata*, 30, 66; plot based on Virāṭa-parvan/not connected with battle, 30, 66; pre-war incident, 67; *samavakāra* type, 66, 77; title, 30; title indicates Bhāsa's affinity for Pāncarāta school, 19–20
Pāñcarātra, 19
Pāṇḍava/s, 29, 66, 68, 71, 73, 76–78
Pāṇḍu, 68
Pāṇḍya, 12
Pāṇini, 17
parallel/-ism, 4, 92, 106, 113
Paranjape, Dr. (Prof. S.M.), 11, 13
Pārvatī, 19, 109
patākā (= banner), 21
patākāsthānaka, 11, 44; tool to foreshadow future, 44
Pāṭaliputra, 20, 25
pathetic, pathos, 49, 50, 52, 71, 75, 94, 102–105, 110
patriotic, 22
Pauravī, 75
perfect/-ed/-tion, 94, 106; chiselled, 55, 100
philosophy/-er/-ic, 17, 50, 103
picture/s, 10, 17, 18, 19, 30, 36–37, 39, 46, 49, 52–54, 67–69, 72, 76, 78, 100, 101, 104, 108–111; artistic, 95; finished, 108; grim, 102; pen, 78, 84; poignant, 89; scintillating, 79; touching, 51; tragic, 52; -motif, 69; -scroll, 68; -esque, 108
Pierian, 114
Pisharoti, Prof. A.K., 13
Pisharoti, Prof. K.R., 13, 52
pity, 52
plagiarism/-ist, 18, 113
plant/s, 68, 87, 99; master, 87; strategic, 89
Platonic, 84
play/s, 3, 4, 5, 7–12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19–21, 23, 25, 27–34, 41, 42, 44–45, 52, 54, 62–70, 72–78, 81–86, 88, 90, 92–94, 96, 97, 114, 116; allegorical, 69, 114; classical, 12; closet, 69, 86; posite, 85; fiery, 85; historical, 85–95; immature, 106; legendary, 83–85; mature, 5; mediocre, 3; of love, 86; of political intrigue, 30; One Act, 29, 66, 67, 75; political, 86; prolific, 88; prologues of, 17; quasi-historical, 85; social, 84, 114; thirteen (see thirteen); titles of (see title); tone of, 85; unique, 29, 77, 84; -let, 73; -wright, 3, 4; -writing, new experiment in, 73
pledge, 87, 88 (see also pratījñā)

plot(s), 12, 27, 30, 34, 42, 44, 57, 64, 66, 67, 71, 77, 81, 84, 88, 105, 106, 107 (see also sub-plot, under-plot); fictitious, 83; main 31, 48; -construction, 5; -design, 73; -fabric, 85, 109; -movement, 51; -structure, 73, 110; -tissue, 5
poem/s, 5, 76, 95, 96, 98
poesy, 18, 115
poet/s, 5, 7, 9, 12, 16–18, 22, 39, 43, 66, 69, 95–98, 109–112, 113, 115; born, 99; court, 12; inspired, 1, 112, 115; mediocre, 43; stalwart, 16; -laureate, 18; of love, 103
poetaster, 1
poetic, 19, 22, 93, 94, 95, 100, 108, 110, 111, 114; art, 107; creation, 111; element, 93, 106; fancy, 109; flights, 77; fervour, 22; figure, 109, 110, 111; genius, 38; gimmicks, 106; justice, 66; licence, 31; mood, 109; ornaments, 109; vision, 111
poetry, 1, 5, 9, 16, 22, 35, 43, 77, 111, 125; argument of 22; good, 69; great, 77; linguistic gymnastics in, 9; perverted view of, 9; pure, 9, 107; sublime, 50
poignant, 22, 37, 54, 58, 89, 90
paḷa, (Malayalam word), 39
police-diary, 53; guard, 81; man, 53; night police, 84
political, 2, 15, 21, 84–86; intrigue/s, 30, 47, 85, 114; power, 88; resolve, 88; steel-wall, 90; tools, 88
poltergeist, 82
Pope, Alexander, 115
portended/portents, 51, 69
porter-scene, 53
portray/al, portrait/s/-ure, 36, 47, 50, 54, 62, 77, 84, 86, 87, 92, 94
postures, assumed, 86
power/s, powerful/ly, 20, 22, 34, 37, 42, 46, 50, 52, 58, 65, 68, 69, 76, 77, 79, 102, 110; dramatic, 92; emotional, 94; military, 88; suggestive, 101
Prabodhacandrodaya, 114
Pracetas, 25
Pradyota, 12, 30
Prakaraṇa, 6, 85
Prakrit, 87, 89; archaisms, 11
Prastāvanā, 114
pratijñā (= pledge), 26, 114
Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa, 12, 23, 26, 28, 30, 31, 42, 85, 86–88, 92, 100, 102, 106, 114; Aśvaghoṣa copied verse from 114; Bhāsa the humorist at his best in mad-cap scene, 87; deals with pre-marriage phase of Udayana's life, 30; described as *Prakaraṇa* by Bhāsa, 85; economy through use of mono-syllables, 101; failure on stage of code-language used, 86; fiery play/"manly drama", 85; groundling appeal of drunkard scene, 100; instance of *karuṇa-rasa*, 102; mature play, 31; *Mudrārākṣasa* modelled upon, 114; political intrigue inter-twined with love-making, 30; product of mellow genius, 85; *śramaṇaka* (or Jivasiddhi), 26; supernatural minimal, 42; *Unmādavāsavadatta* of Śaktibhadra equated with, 12; use of subtleties, a defect, 106; verse of, found verbation in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, 23; Yaugandharāyaṇa dominates, 92
pratimā (= statue), 45, 63
Pratimā-nāṭaka, 12, 13, 19, 20, 25, 28, 29, 31–34, 45–65, 106, 108, 114; chief rasa, 64; comic relief, 53, 61; defects, 64; description of season in prologue, 48; dramatic irony, 53; elevation of Bharata, 34, 63; elevation of Kaikeyī's character, central dramaturgical purpose, 50, 60, 62; equivocation, 53; fore-

shadowing and suspense, 45, 51; humour, 61; innovations, remarkable, 34; Keith's criticism result of perfunctory study, 62; later than and superior to *Abhiṣeka*, 29; mature play, 31; only tragic picture of Sanskrit Drama, 52; *pratimāgṛha* scene, unique inventive skill, 29, 47; *pratimāgṛha* scene, rationale etc. analysed, 53–57, 62–64; Rāma presented as ordinary human being 34; satire, 59; superb creation of genius, 13; title, 29, 45; *Valkala*-episode, beauty of analysed, 47–51
Pratimā-Bharata, 63
Pratimā-Daśaratha, 63
pratimāgṛha, 29, 45, 54
prayer/s, 22, 35, 45, 62
prelude, 51, 76
prince, 84; -ess, 83, 84, 87, 88, 103, 105, 110
Priyadarśikā, 18
prolific/-ity, 3, 4, 88
prologue/s, 1, 10, 45, 74, 85, 101
prophetic, 48 (see under irony)
proportion, 100
propriety, 42, 50, 100 (see *aucitya*)
prose, 11, 43; ornate, 106
provenance, 4, 18 (see home)
providential, 74 (see chance)
psychology/-ical, 54, 90, 91, 98, 99, 110; appropriateness, 39; conflict, 92; insight, 56, 91, 100; moment, 90; necessity, 91; of the blind, 77; situation, 46
pulaka, 39
pun/s/-ing, 10, 16, 21, 45
Purāṇa/s/-ic, 18, 19, 24, 99
purpose, 53, 55, 57, 60, 92, 93, 101; -less, 94
Pūrvarūpa (figure of speech), 110
Pusalkar (Dr. A.D.), 9, 13, 14, 25, 28, 31, 43, 84, 95
Puṣpaka-vimāna, 34, 62
Pūtanā, 81
putraśoka, 60
puzzle, 16

quasi-historical, 85
queen/s, 51, 57, 61, 75

radio-carbon dating, 22
Rāghava Bhaṭṭa, 96
rage, 40, 50
Raghu, 52, 55, 56
Rāhu, 68
Raja, Dr. C. Kunhan, 13
Raja, Dr. K.K., 39
Rājagṛha, 25
Rājasekhara, 1, 4, 10, 32, 88, 94
Rājasiṁha, 10, 12
rākṣasa, 35, 40, 43, 44, 61, 72, 74, 114
rākṣasIs, 37
Rāma, 28, 29, 33–42, 43, 46–50, 52, 56–63, 64, 65, 76, 96, 101, 107; as human being, 34; as incarnation, 34; divinity of, 41; superhuman powers of, 65; Rāma/-'s story, 29, 33, 34–35
Rāmacandra-Guṇacandra, 9
Ramakrishna Kavi, Prof. M., 13
Rāmāyaṇa, 28, 29, 33, 34, 42, 57, 73, 76, 96, 112; original, 33; -play/s (drama/s), 12, 19, 28, 33–65, 67; -story, 28, 34; theme, 29, 34
Rāmāyaṇa-campū, 33 (see also *Campū*)
rasa, 16, 50, 64, 82, 94, 98, 101, 103, 104, 105; dry as dust remnants of, 16; *-samādhi*, 109; *-saṅkara*, 105; *pradhāna-rasa*, 64; *rasānubhava*, 111; (see *adbhuta*, *bhayānaka*, *hāsya*, *karuṇa*)
raudra, 67, 82
Rāvaṇa, 19, 25, 35, 37–41, 43, 44, 58, 59, 61, 65, 76; greatness as warrior, 40

recognition-one-sided, 74; -scene, 92, 93
Red-eyed, 82
reel/s, 56, 59 (see also faint)
relief, 39, 49, 86, 93 (see under comic)
religion/-ious, 15, 19, 42, 78
research/-es, 8, 9, 14, 22, 26
Revā, 47, 49
reveal/-ed, revelation, 55, 56, 60, 74, 79, 84, 108, 110
revelry, 89
Rhetorics, 110
rhetoricians, 104, 109, 110
Rishis-see ṛṣi
role/s, 21, 30, 78, 81, 94; female, 69, 85 (see also cast)
romance/s, romantic, 30, 47, 79, 83–85, 94, 95, 104; love, 30
Romeo and Juliet, 30
ṛṣi/s (also Rishis), 17, 19, 111, 115
Rumaṇvān, 86
Ryder, Dr. 84

śabdácitra, 43
sacrifice/s/-ed, 19, 23, 27, 35, 55, 67, 73, 78, 80, 86, 92, 114
Sāgaranandin, 9
Sāhityadarpaṇa, 96
sahrdaya, 22, 36, 99, 111 (see connoisseur)
Śaiva, 19
Sajjalaka, 84
Śakāra, 84
Śākta, 19
śakti, 20, 36, 70; -tiraskṛta, 115
Śaktibhadra, 12
Śakuni, 78, 80
Śakuntalā, 93, 105, 113
Śakuntala, 96, 105, 106 (see *Abhijñānaśākuntala*)
śākya-śramaṇaka, 25
sāla, 35
Samavakāra, 6, 66 77
sambhoga-śṛṅgāra, 103
samudragṛha, 106
Sandeha (figure of speech), 104
Śaṅkara (see rasa-saṅkara)
Śaṅkarācārya/s, 16, 17, 19
Saṅkarṣaṅa, 81
Śaṅkukarṅa, 82
Sanskrit, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 43, 81, 84, 86, 93, 97, 98, 100, 101, 112; criticism, 101, 104; critics, 104; drama, 29, 52, 93, 104, 113, 116; dramatic literature, 52; dramatist/s, 1, 6, 113; idiom, 93; introduction of, to the west, 9; learning, 9; literature, 1, 78, 112; Mss. 9; plays, 12; plays, rigid convention of later, 46; poet, 5, 97, 112; poetry, 5; rhetoricians, 104, 109; Rhetorics, 110; stage, 82, 86, 92, 105, 106; studies, 8; *subhāṣita*, 5; theatre, 6, 105, 114
Sanskritists, 8
Sanskritisation, 39
Santuṣṭa, 105
Śāpa (name of character), 81
Śāradātanaya, 7, 9
Sarcasm/-tic, 13, 43, 72
Sāraṇa, 38
Śārṅga, 41
Śārṅgadhara, 96
Śarup, Dr./Dr. Laxman, 11, 13, 95
Śāstra/-ic, 25, 95
Sastri, Dr. (see Ganapati Sastri)
Sastri, Pandit Gopaladatta, 96
Sastri Rajavaidya Kalidas, 96
satire/-ic/ical, 44, 45, 59, 72, 84, 96, 105, 115
Śatrughna, 40, 41, 46
Saumilla, 2, 23
Sauvīra, 12, 84
scene/s, 2, 7, 12, 19, 29, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 45, 52, 53, 54, 56, 61, 64, 67, 74, 77, 79, 86, 87, 89, 93, 94, 95, 98, 100, 106, 114; amusing, 105; elephant, 114; dream, 89, 92,

93; drunkard, 100; emotion-packed, 78; encounter, 114; feminine, 89; heart-rending, 77; mad-cap, 87; midnight, 84; recognition, 92, 93; sleep-talking, 86; sleep-walking, 86; tigress, 114; touching, 75; white-washer, 100; wholly Prakrit, 89 (see also under death and dream)
scientific/-ist, 17, 22
secret, 79; -code language, 86
Seleukos Nikator, 26
sensibilities, 16, 22, 89, 100, 116 (see also under aesthetic, artistic)
sensitive/-ity, 91, 100
sentiment/s/-al, 64, 67, 71, 72, 82, 103; comic, 74; fiery, 73; fusion of (blending of *rasas*), 74, 104; heroic, 72, 74, 104; pathetic, 104
set off, 69, 71 (see foil)
Shakespeare/-'s/-ean, 36, 49, 75, 83, 85, 86, 87, 93, 106, 112
Shampooer, 20–21
Shipley, J.T., 27
Shortcomings, 94, 115 (see defects)
side-curtain, 92
silently/silence, 50, 60, 101
simile, 19, 36, 39, 62, 95, 99, 100, 109; sarcastic, 43
śiśuvadha, 71
Sītā, 37, 39, 40, 41, 43–51, 58–60, 61, 63, 65, 93, 101
situation/s/-al, 53, 56, 71, 84, 93, 101, 102; emotional, 101; humorous, 84; hypnotic, 91; psychological, 46
Śiva, 19, 27, 58, 109, 114
Skanda, 19, 36
skill/-ed, 70, 76, 89, 92, 95
skirmishes, 85
sleep/-ing, 10, 25, 53, 55, 72, 90, 91; -talking, 86; -walking, 86
śleṣa, 16
śloka, 24
Smṛtis, 19, 24
social, 18; milieu, 2, 84, play, 85, 114
society, 20, 25, 84
sociologist, 21, 84
Soḍḍhala, 7
solecisms, 11
soliloquy/-ize, 37, 39
solitude, 89
solo-dialogues, 87
Somaprabhasūri, 7
Sophocles/-ean, 3, 44, 78; irony, 44
sound effect, cheap, 43
spectators, 6, 27, 37, 98
spirit/s/-ual, 17, 40, 47, 93
spontaneous/-ity, 9, 51, 77, 94, 99, 100, 109
śrāddha, 20, 58, 65; *-kalpa*, 25, 58
śramaṇakā, 25, 26
śramaṇikā (*nagma*), 25
śravya-kāvya, 98
Śriharṣa, 18, 64, 67
Śrīharṣa-Vikrama, 18
Śrikaṇṭhacarita, 16
Śrīmad-Bhāgavata, 28 (see Bhāgavata Purāna)
Śrīvidyā, 19
Śṛṅgāraprakāśa, 9
Śruti, 19
Stage/-ing, 3, 4, 6, 12, 14, 21, 34, 35, 39, 40, 45, 48, 69, 71, 81, 86, 87, 89, 100, 114; convention, 42; decoration, 47; dialogues, 49; prohibited on, 11; -sense, 86; -tricks, 87; version, 12
Statue/s, 53, 55, 56, 63; -house, 29, 53, 54, 57, 62, 63, 64 (see *pratimāgṛha*)
Story/-ies, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33–35, 42, 47, 51, 55, 57, 60, 64, 67, 70, 73–75, 78, 96
Sthānaka (modern Thānā), 7
Strategic, 38, 85, 89
style/-istic, 11, 13, 95; conventional, 79; grand, 77
Stylistic tests, 31
Sublime/-ity, 36, 50, 93, 116

Sub-plot, 29, 85
Subtlety/-ies, 36, 86, 106
Sudarśana, 68, 69
Sudden/ly/-ness, 37, 40, 44, 46–48, 51, 52, 56, 58, 61, 65, 79
Śūdraka, 84, 113, 114
suggest/-ion/-ive, 22, 25, 26, 38, 39, 48, 56, 52, 64, 65, 90, 96, 101 (see dhvani)
Sugriva, 28, 33–38, 45, 59, 107
Śuka, 38
Sukthankar, Dr. V.S., 13
Sūktimuktāvalī, 88
Sumantra, 51, 52, 57, 59, 63
Sumitrā, 51, 57
Sunaḥsepākhyāna, 73
sun, setting (description of), 38
Sundarakāṇḍa, 33
superman, superhuman, 34, 65
supernatural/ly, 20, 41, 42, 64, 69, 94, 106, 114; forced, 92
surprise, 27, 60, 94
suspense, 5, 27, 51, 84, 92, 105
Sūtradhāra, 10, 17, 84
Svabhāvokti, (figure of speech), 109
Svapnavāsavadatta, 8–11, 13, 20, 28, 30–32, 85, 86, 88–95, 99, 101, 103, 105, 106, 108; Acts II, III wholly feminine, 89; Bhāsa's master-piece/*chef-doeuvre*/most mature play/mellow genius, 8, 31, 85, 101; critics primarily speak of, 9; dream-scene and Vāsavadattā, two highlights of, 92; dream-scene, beauty expounded, 89–91; merits, 93; multi-projection of dramatist's mind analysed, 98–100; *nāndī-śloka* addressed to Balarāma, 20; perennial world literature, 88; political intrigue, subordinate to love, 30; *Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa* contrasted, 85–86; supernatural totally eliminated, 32; Udayana, not foremost character, 92; uniformity of excellence expounded, 94; universal classic, 88; Vāsavadattā, multi-dimensional emotional complex, 94; Viracikā-episode, psychological significance of, 91; wedding portrait of *Pratijñāyaugandharāyana* utilised in *denouement*, 87
Śvetāmbara sect (Jain), 25
symbol/-ic, 39, 57

tadguṇa (figure of speech), 110
tales, 12, 27, 28
talent, 6, 98
Tamil, 7, 76, 112
Tamilnadu, 7, 10
tāṇḍava, 27
Tāpasī, 105
Tārā, 35, 36, 45
Tarkabhāṣa, 8
tarpaṇa, 20
Taruvai, 10
taste/s, 9, 27, 82, 100
taunt/s/-ing, 13, 57, 76, 89
tear/s, 46, 54, 77, 86; -drops, 104
technique, 6, 30, 35, 43, 51, 53, 54, 92, 101, 102, 105, 108, 113, 114, 116 (see under dramatic)
tempers, 27
temple/s, 2, 10, 15, 20; priest, 20
tempo, 5, 95, 106
tender/-ness, 49, 71, 76
Tenmāran, 12
tenor, 70, 73, 77
tense/d, 46, 61, 86, 89, 93
Thānā, 7
theatre, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 47, 48, 114, 116; Greek, 43; Indian, 2, 7, 116; -lovers Sanskrit, 6; -ical, 6
theme, 11, 12, 19, 29–31, 34, 57, 58, 66, 67, 71, 73, 76, 77, 84–86, 88, 98, 102, 108, 113
thirteen, 3, 4, 6, 95, 100; plays, 6, 10–12, 15, 27, 97

Thomas, Dr. F.W., 13
Tilakamañjarī, 83
Tirunelveli, 10
  tissue, 5, 109
title, 11, 12, 28–30, 32, 45, 63, 70, 78, 86, 92, 115
tone, 45, 63, 67, 70, 85, 87, 90, 115; assumed, 92; didactic, 70; ethical, 70; tipsy, 87
tongue-slip/-ped, 60, 64; (see verbal lapses); -tied, 46
topography, 21
touching, 51, 58, 71, 75, 101
touchstone (of greatness), 6, 114
tour-de-force, 52, 86, 92
tradition/s/-al, 4, 9, 16, 24, 27, 28, 62, 64, 73, 78, 83, 113
tragedy, 43, 89; Aristotelian, 29
tragic, 29, 54, 55, 56, 60, 86, 108; feeling, 52, 75; hero, 36, 75; irony, 91
Traivikrama, 12
transformed, 63 (see deviation)
Travancore, 10
tricks, 16, 69, 95
tripuṇḍra, 19
trisyllabic, 37
Trivandrum-plays, 12; Sanskrit series, 10, 14
truth/s, truth, 15, 16, 18, 55, 56, 59, 74, 108, 116
Tulsīdāsa, 112
twist, 55, 88, 91 (see deviation)

Udāttarāghava, 18
Udayana, 12, 30, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 99, 101–105; -plays, 28, 92
Ugliness (name), 82
Ugrasena, 30, 81
Ujjain, 18, 23, 86
Ujjayinī, 12
Umā, 27
under-current, 78; -plot, 73
unfinished, 31
union, 85, 103 (see *sambhoga-śṛṅgāra*)
unity, 5, 67
universal/ly, 1, 2, 8, 88, 113
Unmādavāsavadatta, 12
unravel/ling, 5, 64, 74, 84, 92
upamā, 109
upaniṣadic, 108
Ūrubhaṅga, 28, 29, 31, 66, 75–77, 104, 106; characters unknown to epic, created, 66; defect, 106; Duryodhana as tragic hero, 76; Duryodhana's greatness in fall, 75–76; poetic flight/grand style, specimen of 77; plot laid on battle-field, 66; tragedy Aristotelean/Shakespearean 29, 75; vīrarasa, instance of, 104
Urvaśī, 36, 77
utprekṣā, 109
Utsṛṣṭikāṅka, 6
Uttara, 79
Uttarā, 71, 77, 79, 80
Uttarakāṇḍa, 33
Uttararāmacarita, 114

Vaiṣṇava/-ism, 19, 20
Vākpatirāja, 7, 9
Vakroktijīvita, 100
Vālī (lin), 28, 33–36, 41, 43, 45, 52, 107, 114
Valkala, 48, 49, 63, 64; -episode, 47–51 (see episode)
Vālmīki, 17, 28, 33, 34, 35, 43, 47, 49, 50, 54, 57, 59, 62, 63, 72, 73, 107, 108, 112
Vāmadeva, 61
Vāmana, 7, 98
Vānara, 61
Varāhamihira, 17
Variation (see deviation), 70
Varṇāśrama, 20
Varuṇa, 38, 41
Vasantaka, 86, 105
Vasantasenā, 21, 30, 84, 85
Vāsavadatta, 30, 86, 88–93, 94, 102, 103–105

Vasiṣtha, 49, 50, 55, 57, 60, 61
Vasudeva, 81
Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, 20
Vāsuki, 76
Vatsa, 88
Veda/s, 19, 55, 102
Vedānta-Deśika, 95
Vedic, 17, 19, 55, 73, 102
Veṇīsaṁhāra, 64
Veṇuvana, 25
verbal-jugglary, 9; lapses, 114 (see *lapsus linguae*, tongue)
Verisimilitude, 5, 94, 100
Versatility, creative, 6
Verse/s, 4–7, 10, 21, 23, 24, 31, 35, 43, 45, 53, 54, 69, 70, 73, 74, 77, 85, 88, 95, 96, 107, 109, 113, 114, 116; floating of, 4, 88, laudatory, 88; panegyrical, 88
Vibhīṣaṇa, 38, 40, 43, 44, 107 *vidagdha* (= connoisseur), 1, Vidūsaka, 24, 25, 84, 87, 89, 91, 99, 100 (see clocon, jester)
Vidyādhara/s, 20, 40, 83
Vidyujjihva, 39
Vijayā, 59
Vikramāditya, 23
Vikramāditya, Harṣa, 18
Vikrama Śrīharṣa, 18
villain, 84
vīṇā, 84, 86, 92, 94, 101, 115
Vindhyas, 21, 22
vipralambha-śṛṅgāra, 94, 103
Vīra, 67, 74, 82; -rasa, 77, 104
Viracikā, 91
Virādha, 35
Vīrāṭa, 77–80, 110
Virāṭaparvan, 30, 66
Virtuoso, 64
Viśākhadatta, 113
vision, 16, 20, 37, 52, 91, 100, 111, 116
Viṣkambhaka, 78
Viṣṇu, 19, 29, 34, 45, 81, 104, 114
Viṣṇudharma, 96
Viṣṇupurāṇa, 30
visvajit, 55
Viśvāmitra, 35
Vīthī, 6
vocabulary, 11, 21
Vyāḍi, 17
Vyāsa, 17, 66, 68, 107
Vyāyoga, 6, 73

washerman, 17, 18
War/-rior, 40, 67, 76
Weapons, 78, 81
Wedding-garland, 89 ; portrait/s, 86, 87, 92, 93
Western, 33, 35
White-washer, 53
Whitney, 22
Wine, tanks of, 87
Winternitz, Dr. M., 13, 43, 73, 81
Wit, 5, 78, 84, 102
Witticism, 115
Wonder/-ful, 55, 81, 82, 92
Woolner, Dr. A.C., 13
Word/s, 19, 21, 44, 45, 49, 53, 54, 59, 60, 77, 85, 95, 101
Word-Principle, 16
Wordsworth, 77
World, 1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 27, 33, 50, 60, 75, 87, 88, 91, 103, 109; drama, 6, 93, 105; literature, 88; -traveller, 1
writer/s, 1, 3, 4, 5, 13, 15, 16–18, 23, 24, 27, 95, 98, 112

Yajamāna, 78
Yajña/s, 55, 67, 78, 81
Yajñaphala, 28, 96
Yama, 41
yamaka, 16
Yamunā, 57, 81
Yāska, 17
Yaśodā, 81
Yaugandharāyṇa, 12, 26, 30, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 101, 102, 114; arch-conspirator, 86
Yogaśātra, 25
Yuddhakāṇḍa, 33, 107
Yudhiṣṭhira, 68, 77, 79, 80

Index II

(1-Bhāsa; 2-Bhāsa's; 3-Bhāsa's dramas/plays/works)

1. Bhāsa—
    - a brāhmaṇa, 18, 20
    - actor, 21
    - alleged author of *Ratnāvali* etc. 18
    - anterior to Kālidāsa, 1
    - antiquity of, 13;
    - believer in idol-worship, 20
    - contemporary of Cāṇakya and Candragupta, 31
    - declared as celebrated dramatist by Kālidāsa, 1
    - director of plays, 21
    - discovery of, 9, 10
    - dramatist of the stage, 100
    - earliest surviving pioneer of Indian theatre, 116
    - faith in vedic religion of, 18
    - foreshadowing and suspense in, 105
    - glory of, 2
    - hibernation of, 8
    - home/provenance of, 4, 21
    - humorist at his best, 87
    - invention of, 71
    - Kālidāsa, compared with, 113
    - Kālidāsa drew inspiration from 1
    - lover of Art, 21
    - the man, 17, 21
    - most ancient Indian dramatist, 3
    - neglect of
    - not primarily poet of love, 103
    - not pre-Buddha, 25
    - past master of tragic irony, 101–102
    - pioneer Indian dramatist, 9
    - prolific writer, 3
    - range of, 6
    - references to, 6, 8, 23
    - and soliloquy, 39
    - student of, 114
    - studied assiduously, 8
    - the earliest sanskrit dramatist, 1
    - tribute/homage to, by Kālidāsa, 2
    - Vidūṣakas of, 105
    - a washerman (?), 17, 18
    - well versed in all branches of learning, 18
    - winner of awards, 21
    - wizard of words, 95
    - worshipper of Viṣṇu, 19
    - Bhāsa-current, 113
    - Bhāsa-gotra, 18
    - Bhāsa-mould, 3
    - *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakra*, 3, 4, 10, 14
    - Bhāsa-plays, 6, 12, 26, 28, 97 (see also plays in Index I)
    - Bhāsa-problem, 8, 13, 88
    - Bhāsa-spell, 112
    - Bhāsa-studies, gain for, 14
    - Bhāsa-verses, 24, 95

2. Bhāsa's—
    - acquaintance with epics and purāṇas, 19
    - amusing scenes, 105
    - art, 62, 63, 115; of abridging/condensation, 35, 44; dimensions of, 115; earlier phase of, 41; greatness of 2; most ingenious creations of 86
    - artistic sensibilities, 20

attitude towards art, 20
brush, 63
career, none-too-mature phase of, 70
caste, 18
clowns, 84
creative powers, 42
date, 22, 26
defects/deficiencies, 106, 115
descriptions (darkness, earth, penance-groove, old brāhmaṇas speed), 108
dialogues (best/effective), 49, 80
drama/s (see 3 below)
dramatic justification, 55
dramaturgic motive, 54
dramatic vision, chiselled perfection of, 100
dramatising emotion, 54
education, 17, 18
earlier writings, 109
early hand, 70
experiment to humanise divine, 69
experiment in play-writing, new, 73
fame, 10
faith, 20
freedom from sectarian bias, 19
fancy/imagination, 55
finest creations, 87
footprints on Sanskrit Literature, 112–116
fate, irony, 74
genius, 6, 94, 99, 114; dramatic, 32, 87, 90; for humour, 67, 84; inventive, 29, 34; mellow, 6, 85
gift for expressing emotions, 94
gotra, 18
hand, 63
handling of alaṅkāras, 109
handling of pathos, 29
hold over Indian threatre, 7
home/provenance, 6, 17, 18, 21
humour, 105
imagery, 19
India, 84
invention, 47, 73
inventive skill, 47, 70
love for his country/patriotic spirit, 22
manner, 84
mastery of dialogue, 77
methods, 35
mould, 52
muse, 50, 77
Nāgānanda (?), 18
parentage, 18
pen, power of, for sarcasm and satire, 72
philosophy/values of life, 17
picture of tragic hero, 76
plays (see 3 below)
poetical works, 95
poetry, beauty/strength of, 9
popularity, 6–7
pre-eminence as dramatist, 2
prolific plays, 88
religion/religions beliefs, 19
repetitions, 37
reticence about himself, 17
sarcasm (see pen, above)
satire-crown of, 84; handling of 44 (see also pen above)
sense of economy, 77
stage sense, 86
strange objective (presenting Duryodhana as noble), 77
survival, 5
technique, 35
uncanny eye for raw material, 78
understanding of psychology, 77
use of figures, 103
use of silence, 101
versatility, 6
verse, 74
vocabulary, 21
wit, crown of, 84
work on dramaturgy, 95
works (see 3 below)

3. Bhāsa's dramas/plays/works, 3, 23, 25, 54, 81, 96, 105
  actual number of, 4
  antiquity of, 25
  comparison of, with temples, 10
  currency of, till Rājasekhara's times, 4
  earliest specimens of Indian drama, 3
  evoked admiration of Kalidāsa, 7
  popular in whole of India for many centuries, 7
  post-Buddha, 25
  present diversity of form and technique, 6
  prologues of, brief and uniform to set pattern, 17
  provided inspiration to Kālidāsa, 115
  rediscovery of, 8
  ruled the roost in Kerala for centuries, 7
  slow extinction of, 9
  scored higher than Kālidāsa in stage-worthiness, 115
  sober, judgement on, 88
  special characteristics of, 10–11

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